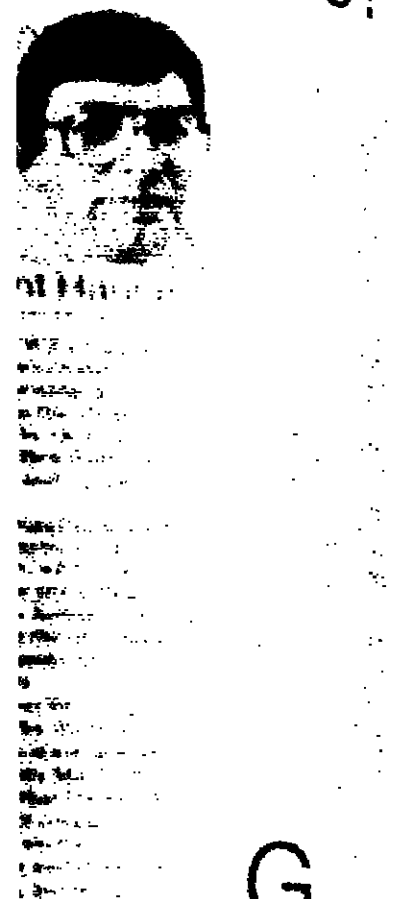
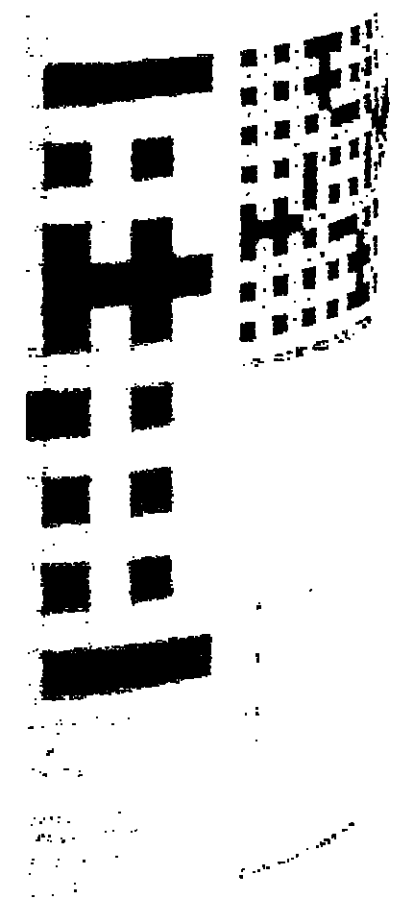


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Thursday October 26 1995

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
46,382

Helping heroin addicts the John Marks way

The smack doctor

Guardian 2 cover story

OnLine

New on the Net: audio on demand

G2 pages 10/13

Film of the Week

Nicole Kidman Triumphs in To Die For



G2 pages 8/9

Tories slash help for tenants

Michael White
Political Editor

NEW government regulations designed to save up to \$400 million a year by clamping down on housing benefit payments will make it virtually impossible for vulnerable tenants such as the elderly, the sick and poor families to qualify for extra help on the grounds of exceptional hardship.

According to a draft text of Department of Social Security guidance, leaked last night to the Guardian, local councils can expect as little as \$5,000 a year to make discretionary awards above their so-called "permitted total" of housing benefit funds.

"The Permitted Total is an absolute limit," the draft says. "Any discretionary payment... which takes expenditure above the Permitted Total, would be unlawful."

Labour said the "draconian" proposals were further proof of the Government's lurch to the right.

The circular, drawn up to implement the new Social Security Administration Act, advises housing officials to invoke the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary's definition of exceptional ("forming an exception; unusual") and of hardship ("severe suffering; extreme privation") in deciding whether to make discretionary payments to tenants of private landlords.

In the past so-called vulnerable groups, pensioners, the sick and disabled, and families with children had special protection.

The Government's scheme requires officials to make "individual decisions, based on individual circumstances, but reflecting local considerations" — including locally-set rent levels.

"To get through these hoops, you'll have to be half-dead," one Labour housing expert said last night.

Hardship caused by non-monetary factors, such as sub-standard accommodation,

will not qualify as "exceptional". The circular states: "A shortfall in rent would not, in itself, ever constitute exceptional hardship. It is the consequences of that shortfall which might constitute exceptional hardship."

Ministers want the income of a tenant's non-dependant relatives in the household taken into account, negotiations urged with landlords for a lower rent level, and a move considered. Tenants will be told to use other assets, including income normally disregarded for social security purposes such as war pensions, to make up any shortfall between what the DSS will pay and the rent.

"These proposals are draconian," Labour's housing spokesman, Nick Raynsford, said last night. "It will place local authorities in a completely impossible position in deciding which tenants are most in need."

The Government's declared aim is to cut benefit fraud, which, the all-party social security select committee is said to be poised to confirm, runs into millions of pounds a year, much of it committed by landlords, not tenants. It wants to target help to the neediest. Labour argues that the Government's solution will not solve the problem of fraud or excessive rents.

The nub of Opposition concern is that under the new rules, likely to be implemented from January 1, the maximum discretion allowed to local authorities to exceed payments in private tenancies deregulated since 1988 is just 0.15 per cent of expenditure.

The Government's contribution to such discretionary payments will be only \$2.5 million nationwide — around \$6,000 per council per annum.

"That would mean an extra \$20 a week in rent for six claimants," said Mr Raynsford.

"The cost-benefit is ludicrous. It is the politics of the lunatic asylum."

Hugo Young, page 9

'I'd rather suffer than not go through anything and die'



Jaymee Bowen as she appears in tonight's BBC programme about her past six months

Never give up, says leukaemia girl

Sarah Bosoley

JAYMEE BOWEN, the 11-year-old girl known until now as Child B, made her first public appearance yesterday since experimental treatment to arrest her leukaemia, and criticised the health authority that refused to treat her.

Asked what she would say to the chief executive of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon health commission, she told a BBC interviewer: "I wouldn't sit there... I'd go over and whack him one. I'd say, thank you for nothing. Now look at me. I'm fine. You could have

paid for it. You had the chance and you blew it."

Jaymee's vivacity and love of life, displayed on film for the first time following yesterday's lifting of a court order of anonymity, will step up the controversy over a health authority's decision to write her off. After experimental treatment in a private clinic, her chances of survival are said to have increased from virtually nil in January to 30 per cent now.

"I say never give up, unless you are just on the last little drop of life you have in you," she said. "I'd rather have gone through more suffering to live than not go through

anything and die." Her father, David Bowen, whose court battle with the authority persuaded an anonymous donor to fund his daughter's treatment, paid tribute to Jaymee. "If there was ever a child who scored well on what she's gone through and what she's done, this is the child."

But Stephen Thornton, the chief executive in question, was unrepentant. "I think if called upon to make a similar decision, it would probably be the same one." The authority would not pay for another course of experimental treatment.

Turn to page 2, column 6



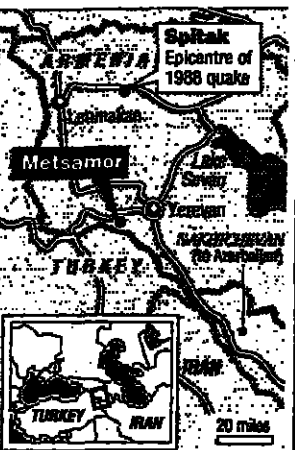
New Chernobyl feared as old reactors restart

Ian Traynor in Bonn and David Hearst in Moscow

ARMENIA has started operating an old and highly suspect nuclear reactor in an earthquake zone, raising fears of a Chernobyl-type disaster. The country, which is seriously short of energy, has admitted not carrying out all necessary safety measures at the reactor because of lack of funds.

The decision to restart the Metsamor plant, more than six years after it was mothballed for safety reasons, was criticised yesterday by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, by Germany and by Western nuclear experts.

But the Armenians, facing the bitter Caucasian winter, appear determined to restart the old pressurised water



re-actor, of a Soviet design described by the US as dangerous enough to cause an accident "akin to Chernobyl".

Bulgaria has also just recommissioned a similar reactor at Kozloduy, bringing

strong criticism from Germany, France and the European Union.

Arkady Avakian, Armenia's energy minister, told the IAEA last week: "I am pleased to inform you that despite the difficulties... the operations for the restart of reactor unit number two have been practically completed."

Hans Meyer, an IAEA spokesman, said: "The position of... every expert in the nuclear field to the Armenian plan is: don't do it."

Siegfried Breyer, a German environment ministry official, said: "Metsamor is in the middle of an earthquake zone... Western safety experts say it's not fit for an earthquake zone and there's no way it can be made safe."

The Metsamor plant was closed down in February 1989, three months after the Armenian earthquake that killed 25,000 people. The station was

unaffected by the tremors, but fears of a catastrophe soared.

Even outside an earthquake zone, the reactor type — the VVER-230 440-megawatt type designed in the 1960s and built in the 1970s — has long been criticised in the West as unsafe. Besides Armenia's there are 10 such reactors — none protected by the containment shells standard in the West — operating in post-Soviet Europe: four in Bulgaria, two in Slovakia and four in Russia. There are also another 15 Chernobyl-type RBMK reactors in use across the region.

Last summer a US energy department study on the VVER-230 reactors found they posed "significant safety risks... As a class these reactors continue to experience serious incidents, raising the spectre of another accident."

The Armenian plant is 35 miles from Yerevan, the Ar-

menian capital where 2 million people live and, according to Mr Avakian, 12 miles from an earthquake zone.

The station was being restarted despite a failure, due to lack of funds, "to implement everything that was planned in the safety areas."

Last week a Russian state commission finally signed the document allowing the Armenian reactor to restart. Armen Abagyan, director of the Scientific Research Institute for the Nuclear Power of Russia, said: "The Armenian people can be calm, as everything is done to provide security of the work of the Armenian nuclear station."

Georgi Kaurov, chief of the information directorate of the Ministry of Atomic Energy, in Moscow said: "Armenia is a seismic zone, but so is Japan. Despite this they have 50 nuclear reactor units. What is really important...

is what kind of geological platform lies under the station."

Mr Kaurov said the station was designed to survive a shock of eight to nine points on the Richter scale. "This station was working during the December 1988 earthquake and no damage was detected. The IAEA gave its report on this station and it was positive."

Western experts agree Armenia and Bulgaria are suffering energy crises so great as to make it difficult for them to keep the reactors closed. Armenia, embroiled in a long feud with its oil-rich neighbour Azerbaijan, has been blockaded and has difficulty importing oil, gas or coal.

Last year the Kozloduy station provided almost half Bulgaria's electricity.

Leader comment, page 8

Terror trial role haunts potential MP

David Beresford

A MAN who died on the gallows in Pretoria 30 years ago is haunting the career of a Labour parliamentary candidate standing in the marginal Tory seat of Exeter.

John Lloyd, who is strongly tipped to take Exeter from the Conservatives, is remembered with some bitterness by the left in South Africa as the man who betrayed John Harris, a teacher hanged in Pretoria in 1965 for sabotage.

The execution of Mr Harris was a particularly traumatic episode for South Africa's white liberals. He was a member of the African Resistance Movement, an organisation of radical intellectuals who carried out a series of sabotage attacks on government installations as symbolic acts of armed propaganda.

The campaign went wrong on July 24, 1964, when Mr Harris planted a bomb at Johannesburg railway station. He later claimed that he telephoned warnings to police and newspapers, but the authorities failed to clear the station and a 77-year-old woman died in the blast.

A key factor in Mr Harris's conviction and execution was the testimony of Mr Lloyd, who turned state witness in exchange for immunity. He was released after the trial and emigrated to Britain.

Mr Lloyd has risen through the ranks of the Labour Party in Exeter, serving on the city council and in the 1992 general election recording one of the largest swings in the country.

"It was 30 years ago: it was an extremely distressing period and it is something that has marked my life ever since," Mr Lloyd, a barrister, said yesterday. "If I had been a free agent I wouldn't have done it. I was in detention under interrogation and I saw events partly through the eyes of my interrogators. I saw John Harris as someone who had broken our code; we



John Lloyd... 'If I had been free, I wouldn't have done it'

had a code of not endangering human life. In those circumstances, in solitary confinement, under interrogation, that was the way I saw it."

Mr Lloyd said he was beaten by police and forced to stand for 1½ days during the interrogation. His role in the affair was raised in Exeter about 10 years ago by a former South African political prisoner, Hugh Lewin — against whom he had also testified — when he was elected chairman of the local branch of the anti-apartheid movement. Mr Lloyd said the ANC and the movement investigated and gave him clearance.

It was not an issue before the 1992 election, but he was questioned about it in August this year by the general secretary of the Labour Party, Tom Sawyer. "I don't know what checking he did, but I was confirmed as a candidate," Mr Lloyd added.

Friends of Mr Harris have long suspected that South African police deliberately avoided clearing the Johannesburg station in order to discredit the anti-apartheid cause as terrorist. The suspicion has been encouraged by a former security branch officer, Paul Erasmus, who claimed recently that the force occasionally planted bombs in crowded restaurants, pretending they were the work of the ANC.

Ministers clean up act.

In the corridors of power, sleaze is being replaced by the gentle squeeze of a MICRO CORRECT. Ministers are cleaning up their acts with its fine tip and smooth delivery. Government leaks and wastage are a thing of the past and on white papers it flows more freely than an M.P. on Question Time. Whether you go for the pocket version or the vertically challenged one, you will own a paragon of political correctness.

Pentel

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Sketch

All of a fluttery over the lotter



Simon Hoggart

THE debate on the National Lottery resumed last Saturday night. The boredom was so great you could hear balls dropping all over the place. All it lacked was a Turner's intellectual rigour.

The debate was a struggle between the downwardly mobile on both sides. Last week Jack Cunningham was voted off Labour's shadow cabinet, and the National Heritage job was his consolation prize. Mrs Bottomley has been, to put it kindly, moved sideways. There was the faint air of two of life's losers bickering with each other for want of anything better to do: Rosenkrantz with Guildenstern, Vladimir and Estragon.

To be fair, there is a convention in the Commons that however unwanted a front bench position might be, the speaker has to imply that his entire life has been leading up to this fulfilment of his every dream. Since he or she has barely had time to look at the briefing papers, there is a serious risk of looking very silly — a risk both Mr Cunningham and Mrs Bottomley are always prepared to run.

At one point a Labour backbencher shouted in desperation: "Bring back David Mellor!" It was that kind of day.

(Actually, Mr Mellor was favouring us with one of his rare visits. It must be hard for him to make a speech these days without someone on the other end of the phone. "As a first-time minister, David, I mean, it's a load of rubbish innit? I mean, why should these Eritrean lesbians get our money, eh?")

They couldn't even decide what to call the topic. Mr Cunningham referred to it as the "lode" and Mrs Bottomley, in a speech relieved by splendid Spoonerisms (or dyslexia, as we call it in these enlightened

days), spoke about people having a fluttery on the lotter. Mr Cunningham had a difficult time of it, and is hardly in a position to complain about the way the money is spent. Nor are the punters.

Can you imagine someone telling their bookseller that they were outraged at his decision to spend their losing bets on a new jag?

So he chattered vaguely about the need to reduce Camelot's profits, the lack of "fun" in the lottery, and the loss to charities, who had been "shabbily treated". He hoped that the "Chiff Slictry" would not steal lottery money.

Mrs Bottomley began by commiserating with him over the shadow cabinet elections (As the Labour Party said to him, "it won't be you-hoo!") Mr Cunningham struck a poignant note in reply: "As a life-long supporter of the Labour Party and of New Labour, I am used to coping with triumph and disaster. It's just that the disasters have been a bit too frequent lately." It was his only moment of real feeling.

But Mrs Bottomley herself had little to say except to complain that Labour detested success and to list some — no, many — of the institutions which had received Lottery funds. Weston Favell Upper School in Northampton? The local community in Bennachie, Aberdeen? Barrow and District Table Tennis Club?

Nothing would stop her. The Patrician Youth Centre in Downpatrick, County Down. (What's a patrician youth centre? Is it where Prince William goes to pick up girls?) Fulbourne Parish Church Millom Amateur Operatic Society!

Finally, just as she seemed to have run out of obscure beneficiaries, up sprang James Coughman of Gillingham. Had she heard the good news about the Gillingham Juniors? They have received \$650,000 to establish a national trampolining centre!

Suddenly it all made sense. What used to give Mrs Bottomley her special allure was the fact that she looked energetic, fresh-faced and flushed, as if she had just been leaping on a trampoline. Yesterday she looked as if she had just fallen off.

Review

Keeping one step ahead of events

Judith Mackrell

Event
Merce Cunningham Dance Company
Riverside Studios, Hammersmith

IT'S A bit like watching people in the street... it goes on from day to day, some things repeat, some things change, you never see the same performance twice. As Merce Cunningham says, one good reason why he came up with the Event was that it would keep him supplied with changing views of his choreography. The other was that it would allow his company to perform in spaces as unlikely as gyms or tiny Indian dance theatres or as ordinary as the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, west London.

A Cunningham Event is basically a collage of extracts taken from existing works, stitched together with sequences of new choreography and allowed to run as a seamless performance. The order of dances can change every night and the material is chosen to suit the quirks and limits of the venue.

The Event gives Cunningham the fun of revisiting parts of his repertoire (and at 76 he now has a huge oeuvre). It gives audiences the hypnotic pleasure of slipping into 90 minutes of extraordinary and entrancing dance, undistracted by intervals or changes of scene.

For his current season of Riverside Events, Cunningham has put his dancers in front of a huge painting by Robert Rauschenberg — a racy energetic collage. At the sides of the stage the dancers, in full view, keep warm be-

tween entrances, and the four musicians improvise a dense score of electronic sound, violin, voice, and a tableful of do-it-yourself percussion. It is pleasantly easy to get almost stoned on the choreography's richness, letting one's gaze drift between connecting shapes and jigsaw puzzle rhythms. But certain moments keep startling us back into brisk attention — like the flurry of jumping arabesques where the dancers' limbs twitch with random sparks of electricity.

Event was not, though, just about all the pure and intricate movement Cunningham has ever made. It was also, disconcertingly and wittily, about jokes and play acting. Four dancers in baseball boots bounce onto the stage and are suddenly dancing like striking histrionic poses.

Cunningham then dances his first solo and we all sit enthralled as this most refined dance intelligence perches on a chair and pulls faces at us, swapping exaggerated scowls, grins and sighs of ennui like theatre masks. Later a pattern of deftly stepping dancers turns into a crowd of manic eccentrics and Cunningham threads a path through them, a curmudgeon in a black suit. The dance and the stories change so fast you cannot keep track — then you blink again and see that the whole company has got itself into line to take its bows.

At the centre is Cunningham, smiling and reminding his audience that he is not just a maker of fabulous dance but also a great man of the theatre.

This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's paper.

Howard admits 'white list' intentions amid accusation of playing race card

Alan Travis and John Carvel

THE Home Secretary, Michael Howard, last night acknowledged his intention to introduce legislation to restrict the rights of asylum seekers, and Amnesty International claimed he had already been operating "a white list in embryo" for seven countries.

The Government was accused by Opposition parties of playing the race card as the Home Office confirmed the Guardian's disclosure that the Queen's Speech on November 15 will include legislation to set up a list of "safe countries" from which all asylum applications will be presumed bogus.

Home Office sources indicated the contents of the list will not be written into legis-

Powell's race legacy 'lives on'

"The Government's policies indicate that the legacy of Enoch Powell is not dead, and that Jean-Marie Le Pen would find easy adherents in this country, should European unification finally move beyond rhetoric."

Wole Soyinka, Nobel laureate, on yesterday's Guardian, Nobel of a "white list" for asylum seekers. Page 17

lation and will remain flexible. No final decision has been taken but it is believed that Nigeria and Sri Lanka are among those being considered while Algeria will not now be included.

Britain floated its idea that Nigeria might be considered safe at a European Union meeting on asylum three weeks ago but the claim was dismissed out of hand by senior immigration officials from other member states.

Even the British official agreed that the risk of persecution and could have a claim to asylum if they managed to reach Europe. Under EU rules, each member state is free to determine its own policy.

Mr Howard confirmed his intention to legislate when asked on BBC radio if a "white list" of safe countries would not be the disadvantage of asylum seekers. "You will find most European countries employ a similar form of control," Mr Howard said.

"We have a real problem in this country. I want to make sure that genuine refugees get the sanctuary this country has always been proud to provide but I believe that we must take firm action against bogus asylum seekers."

The Liberal Democrats' Alan Beith said that if such a system had operated in the 1930s, Germany could still have been on a list of "safe" countries while Jewish refugees applied to enter Britain. In the face of the disclosure, Labour renewed its pledge to oppose the legislation.

The Home Office also confirmed that it has been running a pilot scheme in which 200 asylum applicants a month since May have had their claims considered under an accelerated procedure requiring documentary evidence to be supplied within five working days.

The trials have covered some applicants from Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Romania and Poland. Applicants retain full appeal rights.

Last night, Amnesty International's refugee officer, Richard Dunstan, described these "short procedure pilots" as the "white list in embryo" but a Home Office spokesman insisted they were different as there was no official assumption that any asylum claim was unfounded.

Those selected for the trials were either asylum seekers within two months of the expiry of their visitors' visas or could not produce sufficient evidence of their entry to Britain.

Jan Shaw, a refugee officer at the UK Section of Amnesty International, said she would be writing to Mr Howard. Amnesty was concerned

about the records of Nigeria, Algeria and Sri Lanka. "The situation in Nigeria is the most serious human rights crisis in more than 30 years. And we have had dozens of reports in the last 10 to 15 years about very serious human rights violations perpetrated in Sri Lanka."

Nick Hardwick, chief executive of the Refugee Council, warned that the consequences of such measures would be very grave.

Claude Moraes, director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said: "We know for certain that the use of an inflexible, rigid list of this sort will inevitably lead to some asylum seekers being sent back to torture, persecution and possibly death."

Howard firm on curbs, page 5; Letters, page 5; Arms and asylum, page 9



Kiss-and-tell invitation to teenage girls is withdrawn after Wakeham steps in. Andrew Culf reports on how the young prince's blushes were spared

Sun's 'tittle-tattle' Wills hotline angers palace

BUCKINGHAM Palace yesterday issued a telephone hotline set up by the Sun to encourage teenagers who snatched a kiss with Prince William to ring the newspaper.

A palace spokesman said the "invitation to teenagers to ring up with their tittle-tattle could be against the letter and spirit of the newspaper industry's code of practice."

Yesterday's Sun splashed on its front page with an account of the 23-year-old prince, on half-term holiday

from Eton, attending a party at the Hammermill Palace, west London. The report was headlined: "Wills kisses wild party girls — One on his lap at toilet's end."

A two-page report inside the tabloid ended with the message: "Did you kiss him? Were you one of the girls who snatched a smacker from Wills? Or do you know a pal who did? Ring the Sun... we'll call right back."

After behind-the-scenes discussions between the newspaper and the Press Complaints Commission — whose

chairman Lord Wakeham warned the press two months ago to respect the prince's privacy — the paper agreed not to run the hotline again, nor use any material it provided.

It is understood Lord Wakeham expressed considerable concern about the hotline at a meeting of the commission yesterday. He told members the Sun would not use such a means to trawl for stories about Prince William or any other child in the future.

The Sun's report suggested the prince was "surrounded by a bevy of mini-skirted

beauties" at the party and that he had kissed a "string of teenage girls."

A palace spokesman said: "We have looked at the report very carefully, and in view of the fact the prince is only 13 years old, the thing we looked at most closely is the invitation at the end of the piece for other teenagers to ring in with their tittle-tattle. That was a matter for concern."

He said the palace was not making a formal complaint. "It is a matter for the industry to consider. The party was in a public place and it was

not a private event, but parents across the country, many of whom must be readers of the Sun, may wonder whether they would want their own children subject to such an enormous report."

The palace said it had been generally encouraged by the response of the media to Lord Wakeham's request that the prince be allowed to grow up like any other child. "We are pleased so far, but it is early days — there are years to come, not months."

Nell Wells, deputy editor of the Sun, denied invading the

prince's privacy. "Reporting a party of 2,000 people at a public venue like the Hammermill Palace can hardly be an invasion of privacy," he said. A spokeswoman for News International said it was unlikely the paper would run the hotline again. "It is not the kind of thing you would do twice."

The paper's story was accompanied by a mocked-up front page picture of the prince in a dinner jacket, with the caption: "How bowled Wills would have looked at the rave-up."

Angry Santer pulps commissioner's plan to tell all by publishing outspoken diary

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE future of Ritt Bjerregaard, the European Union's environment commissioner, remained in doubt last night after she was forced to withdraw an outspoken diary of her first months at the commission three days before publication.

In a humiliating climbdown Mrs Bjerregaard, who had defended her right to publish details of private conversations and her thoughts about colleagues and heads of government in the interests of openness, bowed to pressure in an attempt to limit the damage.

The book, The Commissioner's Diary, which was due to be rushed out in Mrs Bjerregaard's native Denmark on Saturday, may have to be pulped, although some copies are already in circulation there. It came to light when extracts revealing heavy criticisms of Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl, France's President Jacques Chirac, Spain's prime minister Felipe

Gonzalez and commission colleagues were published in the Danish press.

Mrs Bjerregaard was forced to back down by Jacques Santer, the commission president, at a meeting yesterday morning. Afterwards she said: "It is senseless to have my political work discredited by publishing this book... the aim was to enhance public understanding of the work of the EU, but in fact this has had the opposite effect."

"Today I have informed the publishing house that I do not want the book to be published, and the book will consequently not be released."

Officials in Brussels last night could not recall a more public or personal rebuke for a commissioner, and were saying the incident had given Mrs Santer an opportunity to emulate his predecessor Jacques Delors and stamp his personality on the commission.

A spokesman for Mr Santer, asked whether Mrs Bjerregaard still had the commission's confidence, replied

coldly: "There is no reason for her not to." But some are questioning whether she can still work with her colleagues after publishing what she thought of them.

Mrs Bjerregaard, who has featured in several controversies including at least three since moving to Brussels at the start of the year, appeared bewildered by the latest row. In her statement she described the book as an attempt to keep the public informed about her work.

The 140-page diary describes Mr Chirac's indifference to Mr Santer, criticises Mr Kohl for inattention, suggests Mr Gonzalez has no political will and attacks fellow commissioners for being badly briefed or missing meetings.

The incident has exposed loopholes in the rules governing commissioners who, unlike their civil servants, have no sanction except moral pressure to prevent them breaking confidentiality.

Pass Notes, G2 page 3

'I say never give up... I'd rather go through more suffering to live than not do anything and die'

continued from page 1

ment, should Jaymee have a relapse, he said.

Mr Bowen, who originally requested the court order banning his daughter's identification so that she should not find out how ill she was, applied to three Court of Appeal judges yesterday to have it lifted. He hopes to raise money for the further course of treatment he has been told Jaymee may need by selling the story to the newspapers.

Although Mr Bowen already has an arrangement with the Daily Mirror, the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham, conceded that there was more money to be made through other deals.

In a further embarrassment for the health authority, he made it clear that he felt publicity, with its inherent risk of intrusion, was justifiable for the purpose of raising money for the experimental treatment she was refused on the National Health.

Sir Thomas, who upheld the authority's decision not to treat Jaymee in March, said:

"I don't think the maintenance of reporting restrictions can be justified if the consequence were denial of treatment which might be of life-saving benefit."

The BBC interview with Jaymee and her father, for which they have not been paid, will appear in a Panorama programme tonight. But negotiations are believed to be under way with tabloid newspapers willing to pay money into a trust fund in exchange for further coverage.

Jaymee, whose home is in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, is now back at school.

She is being admitted to the Portland Hospital, London, for 48 hours during her half-term break. Dr Gravett said last night: "The purpose of the admission is to adjust the drugs that she is being given."

Jaymee has been suffering from leukaemia for five years. Last year she had a transplant with bone marrow donated by her sister, Charlotte, now 9, but in January had a relapse. Doctors said

she had only a 2 per cent chance of surviving a second transplant, and gave her six to eight weeks to live.

"The doctor who later treated her in the private sector also agreed that a second bone marrow transplant was not indicated," said Mr Thornton.

Mr Bowen, who brought his two daughters up alone after his marriage broke up when Jaymee was 2, but who now shares a home with his woman friend and her children, refused to accept what he was being told.

Dr Peter Gravett at the London Clinic was initially prepared to carry out the second transplant but eventually opted for an experimental treatment.

The health authority has been funding Jaymee's medical care, involving expensive cancer drugs, at the London clinic since September 11, when the experimental treatment ceased. "We will continue to do so as long as she needs it, without cost limit," said Mr Thornton.

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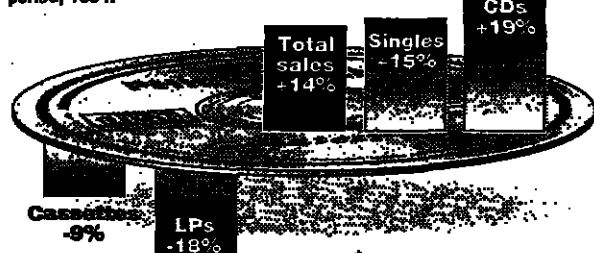
Knight Bachelor boy... Sir Cliff shows off his medal as he leaves Buckingham Palace. He said being knighted by the Queen was one of his greatest moments. PHOTOGRAPH BY DYLAN MARTINEZ

Music industry on song as sales go up a fifth

Congratulations all round in the pop world as Sir Cliff Richard collects his knighthood from the Queen, report Ian King and Lisa Buckingham

Pump up the volume

Global music sales, January to June 1995 compared with same period, 1994.



BRITAIN'S music industry was boasting more than the knighthood for Sir Cliff Richard, the pop world's Peter Pan, following the release of figures yesterday which showed that sales have powered ahead by more than a fifth in the first six months of the year.

The figures were compiled

too early for the furiously-hyped battle of the bands between Blur and Oasis to have any impact. But even so, sales rose sharply enough to push Britain into the five fastest-growing music territories in the world.

Boosted by eagerly-awaited releases such as Stone Roses' Second Coming and the Bee-

ties At The Beeb, Britain is now the fourth most lucrative market for music companies after the US, Japan and Germany.

The 21 per cent rise in first half sales far outstripped the global average which, at 14 per cent, lifted revenues for the worldwide music industry to \$15.82 billion (\$10 million),

according to figures from the research group, IFPI.

Despite controversy over the price of CDs, the format continued to dominate and the price of up to £14.99 is regarded as affordable.

The latest figures underline a revival of the singles market, with hands which appeal to a younger audience, such as Take That, contributing to the upswing, according to Genaro Castello, of the EMI retail chain. "It was Take That who really helped put the focus on the seven-inch single," he said. "It is true Blur and Oasis helped that process, but we'd been seeing a revival in seven-inch sales before the summer."

Mr Castello said bands like Take That often put out several versions of the same single, encouraging fans to buy them all, with the CD single format also proving a

strong growth area. There has also been heavy discounting in the singles market, as record executives seek to gain a coveted number one slot for a release, which usually acts as a "taster" for the more lucrative albums.

In this respect, the Blur-Oasis rivalry was a classic example, with EMI selling the Blur single Country House for as little as £1.99, while the rival Oasis single Roll With It was typically selling at £3.99. Indeed, some in the industry suspect EMI will have been lucky to have made a significant profit on the Blur single.

Although music remains one of Britain's biggest foreign currency earners with invisible earnings from royalties helping make it the third largest net export sector, after spirits and construction equipment but ahead of pharmaceuticals, retail sources

say overseas sales have been under pressure this year.

Traditional top earners in the enormous US market, such as U2, Genesis and Phil Collins, have not released albums. The highest-placed British artist in the Billboard 200 is currently ranked at 22. A spokesman for Virgin/Orion commented: "The big UK artists haven't released anything and Brit Pop has not crossed the pond [to the US] very well."

There may be no sign of a slowdown in the sale of CDs but vinyl LPs are a dying format, despite the well-publicised insistence of some bands that their albums should be produced on vinyl and nothing else. The best efforts of specialist stores catering for rock's nostalgic buyers still left the global sale of LPs down by more than 18 per cent.

'Bar room' memo posits new brawling mood at Telegraph

Andrew Cuff
Media Correspondent

READERS of the Daily Telegraph, that bastion of unchanging conservative values, should prepare themselves for a rude awakening. They are apparently about to be subjected to a relentless series of militia-style attacks and alarmist stories, stopping just short of distortion, from the paper's new editorial regime.

The thoughts of Sarah Sands, who becomes deputy editor in December and is at present associate editor of the London Evening Standard, were revealed in a leaked memo intended for Charles Moore, who took over as the Telegraph editor on Tuesday.

It praised the Telegraph's reputation for accurate reporting — and then appeared to outline a novel strategy for the future. "The Telegraph's cheerful disposition must never look like complacency," Ms Sands wrote. "News stories are, of course, alarmist and we should play on people's fears, although not perhaps their prejudices."

"The middle classes want to read about unemployment and negative equity and juvenile delinquency. We should sell stories hard but just stop short of distortion."

Yesterday Ms Sands played down the memo's importance. "They were a few initial stray thoughts that came into my head before going to have a drink with Charles."

She said the memo was intended to illustrate that news is an aberration, rather than the norm. She added: "The memo was intended to be light-hearted and ironical. It was not a blueprint for anything, just bar room stuff."

This will come as a relief to

Sands storm

□ "We should be basically friendly and fair-minded but then take people aback with ferocious, militia-style attacks."

□ "News stories are, of course, alarmist and we should play on people's fears..."

□ "We should sell stories hard, but just stop short of distortion..."

□ "The Mail's brilliance is not just money but energy. It is not just getting the wife, but mother, grand-mother and schoolfriends. The Mail gets the best out of people through fear."

one Telegraph columnist Ms Sands' "dream list" of writers for the paper includes Barbara Amiel, wife of the Telegraph's Canadian proprietor, Conrad Black. But she adds: "Victoria Coren has to go."

Ms Sands believes the Standard's computer system by a fellow journalist.

The paper has a reputation for technological misfortune: in August a faxed article by Nick Howard, the Home Secretary's son, was accidentally printed under the byline of the former Labour politician, Bryan Gould.

Mr Moore has strongly resisted criticisms that he is hotter on comment than news, and decided on his first day as editor to lead yesterday's paper with an exclusive account of a study by the Commission on Children and Violence.

No other paper carried the story — they had all respected its embargo.

Hunt for Nato chief deadlocked as Major pushes Leon Brittan

John Palmer in Brussels

JOHN MAJOR has refused to endorse the front-running candidate for the new secretary-general of Nato, and is trying to persuade allies to support the last-minute candidate of the UK's senior European commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan.

Mr Major's decision to hold up the appointment has thrown the entire process into confusion and upset the Netherlands, which put forward its former prime minister, Ruud Lubbers, to succeed Willy Claes, who resigned last week over corruption allegations.

Although Mr Major has considered other British candidates, he is sounding out the reaction of Nato allies to Sir Leon. The EU commissioner for trade and relations with the United States failed to secure overall control for foreign policy when commission portfolios were distributed earlier this year.

Although he is a big political figure in Brussels, other Nato governments will weigh his claims against those of Mr Lubbers, who is well known for his commitment to a stronger European defence role, and those of the former Danish foreign minister, Ole Ellemann-Jensen, the other leading candidate.

Mr Major told the Dutch prime minister, Wim Kok, of his search for a British candidate, at the United Nations 50th anniversary celebrations in New York this week.

"Alas, we did not get the green light [for the appointment of Mr Lubbers]. We may think this is regrettable but it is a perfectly normal process," Mr Kok said. Mr Major had refused to divulge the name of the British candidate, but promised to back Mr

Lubbers if the UK finally decided not to push him forward.

Most other obvious British candidates appear out of the running. Mr Major has given himself until the weekend to come up with a British nomination who could confidently expect the backing of all 16 alliance member states.

In spite of speculation to the contrary the former foreign secretary, Douglas Hurd, has made it known he is not in the running, partly because of his new responsibilities as chairman of Natwest Bank.

"Leon Brittan does know quite a lot about foreign affairs and defence, and he is heavily involved in developing transatlantic relations," said yesterday. Others pointed out that Sir Leon's appointment would neither risk a by-election nor upset the delicate balance between pro and anti-Europeans in the British cabinet.

Among other British names discussed Lord Owen, another former foreign secretary and EU peace envoy to Bosnia, is ruled out because of US disapproval of his role in the former Yugoslavia. Since the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, has only a 4,000-vote majority in his Edinburgh Pentlands seat, and the government's Commons majority has fallen to five, his nomination appears improbable.

Dutch officials yesterday blamed Mr Major's refusal to back Mr Lubbers for the deadlock. Although Western governments want to fill the post quickly, not least to avoid a political vacuum in Nato, the manoeuvres behind rival candidates may now mean that no appointment will be agreed for a fortnight.

Chris Woollam, page 6

The best stories are in The Guardian

October 25

Refugees face 'white list' test

Followed up by: Independent Times Daily Mail BBC TV

October 24

Police chaos exposed

Followed up by: Independent Times Daily Mail Sun BBC TV

October 10

Cabinet clash on lottery

Followed up by: Independent Times Daily Mail Sun BBC TV

October 5

Cabinet split on race issue

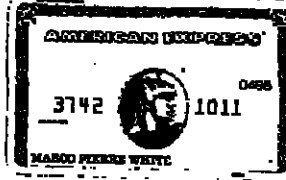
Followed up by: Independent Times Financial Times Daily Express BBC TV

"The Guardian is the only paper worth mentioning." Peter Snow, Newsnight, October 23

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Are you and the Prime Minister good friends? 'I've always felt that I really like working for him. He is the Prime Minister and I'm not keen on people trying to claim a friendship. I'd rather just express my feelings, which are tremendous admiration. He's kind enough still to see me and if he values my opinion, I'm enormously grateful.'

Linda Grant talks to Sarah Hogg

G2 page 4

The Guardian
Intentions
race card

ingers palace

ACCINN

High crime levels and low detection rates in report puts pressure on forces to improve performance

Police warned on under-performing

Lawrence Donegan

FOUR police forces were told yesterday to review their handling of violent crime after new figures suggested they were under-performing.

Trefor Morris, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, said the Metropolitan, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and West Midlands police forces had the lowest detection rates in the country for violent crime per 100 officers.

Mr Morris, who was speaking at the launch of his 1984/85 report, said that there was normally a clear link between high levels of crime and high detection rates.

But in some forces, notably in the four he named, the high level of violent crime contrasted with a low level of detection.

"These forces have something to worry about and need to look very carefully at their performance," he said.

Nationally, the detection rate for violent crime was high, at 76 per cent, but individual forces' rates varied between 48 per cent and 100 per cent. The forces with the best record on violent crime detection were Dyfed-Powys, Wiltshire, Gwent, North Wales and Suffolk.

Mr Morris had not pub-



'These forces have something to worry about and need to look very carefully at their performance'

— Trefor Morris

lished performance league tables because chief constables argued they were overly simplistic.

His report said: "Violent crime covers a wide range of offences and any interpretation of performance must take account of the mix of crime and the degree of difficulty in policing particular areas."

But he defended the use of performance indicators, saying that they provided a powerful incentive for forces to improve their efficiency.

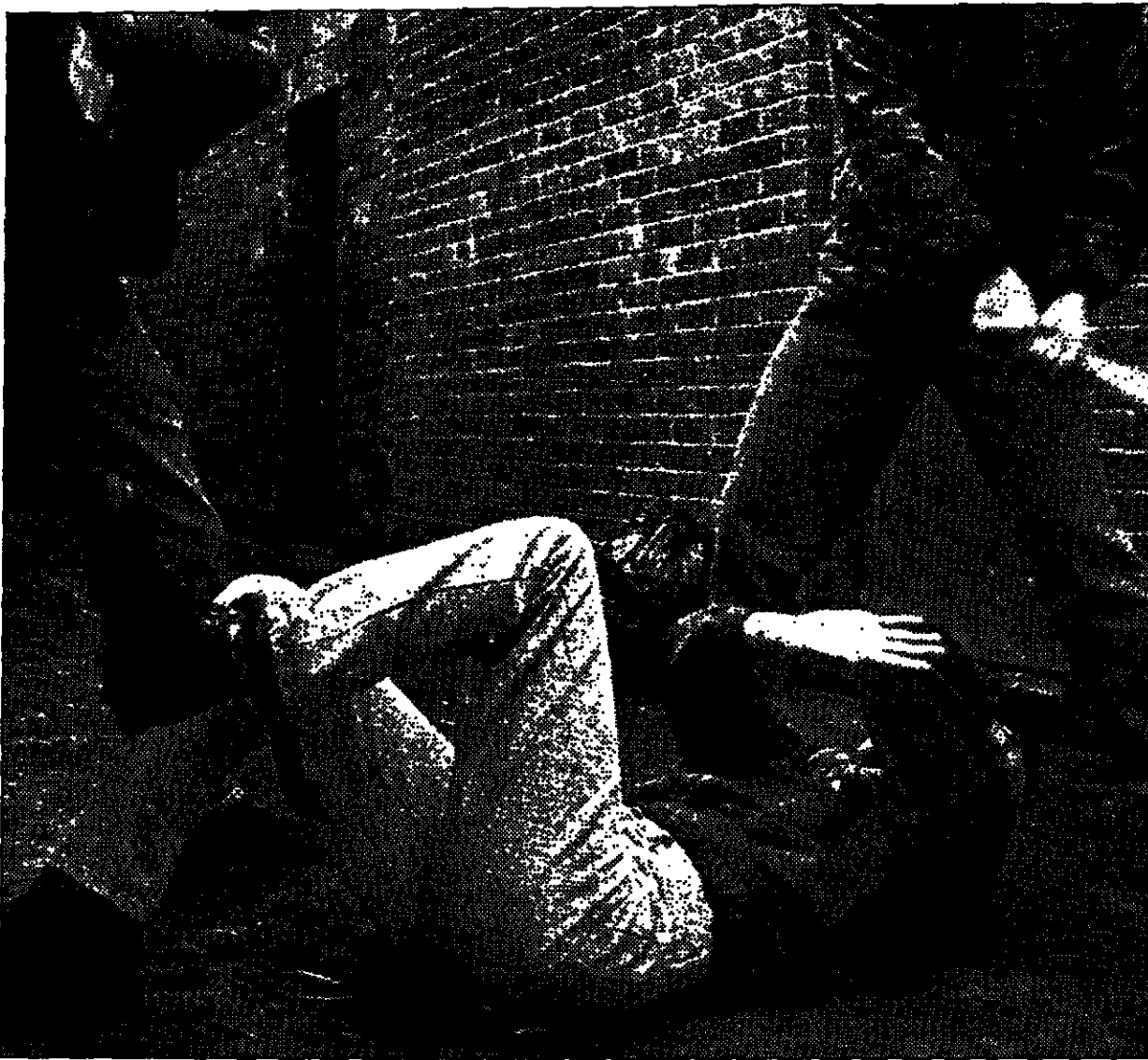
The Inspector's report also revealed that the average detection rate for burglary was just 24 per cent, although Mr Morris said this was an encouraging improvement on recent years.

The Metropolitan police last night said it had improved its record on tackling violent crime and burglary.

Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan police commissioner, said latest figures showed an additional 23 per cent of violent crimes per 100 officers were solved and the clear-up rate for burglaries rose by 6 per cent, while overall crime in London fell by 7 per cent.

He said: "I am pleased at the improvements in our performance, particularly when you take into account that the Met has additional pressures placed upon it which no other force in the country has to face."

"We have, for example, a unique responsibility for anti-terrorism and Special Branch activities which cross national and international boundaries. We also have a major public order role, and a level of serious crime that is heavily biased to London and the south east."



New figures have highlighted poor detection rates for violent crime, falling to 48 per cent in some areas

Royals to pay own air fares

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

MEMBERS of the royal family own paying their own air fares when they use the £7 million-a-year Queen's Flight, Nicholas Soames, minister for the armed forces, announced last night.

The decision — yet another saving for the taxpayer — was recommended after the findings of a Cabinet Office efficiency review under Sir Peter Levene, the Prime Minister's adviser on efficiency.

A row broke out earlier this year over a visit by Prince Andrew to the Open golf championships at St Andrews. Buckingham Palace said it was an official visit, but the competition's organisers said it was not. The royal family have been asked to pay their air fares from April 1.

The Government's decision was released in a parliamentary answer to Alan Williams, Labour MP for Swansea, who has pursued royal spending over the last three years. He said yesterday: "It's about time this decision was taken."

Figures released at the same time showed the royal family cut the number of its flights from over 1,100 in 1991 to 870 last year, when the Ministry of Defence took over their running.

At that time the MoD admitted it could not sort out the accounts to show how many royals used the flights for private and official flights, and how much was made by non-royals.

Now a new accounting system will be able show who uses royal planes, with private flying becoming a charge to the Privy Purse. The royal family will only bear the proportionate cost of running the £7 million flight, with the rest falling on the MoD.

The latest decision is one of a series in the last two years which has seen the Queen paying tax and the royal yacht, Britannia, being phased out.

Threat to Major's schools plan

John Carvel Education Editor

FINANCIAL pressures are forcing grant-maintained schools to cut teaching staffs, according to evidence from the government agency responsible for setting their budgets sent to the teachers' pay review body.

Despite generous funding in the early years of the policy to encourage schools to opt out of local authority control, the Funding Agency for Schools is now warning of "financial difficulties grant-maintained schools have been experiencing this year".

The problem threatens to upset John Major's strategy of encouraging another wave of voluntary opting out prior to a possible general election manifesto pledge for a com-

pulsary switch of the remaining 24,000 council-maintained and voluntary-aided schools to self-governing status.

Michael Collier, the agency's chief executive, told the review body there were 157 teacher redundancies in grant-maintained schools in the first six months of this financial year, compared with 57 throughout the whole of the previous one.

Although Mr Collier noted this was partly due to more getting special compensation to take early retirement, he said the increased number of grant-maintained schools from 926 in April 1984 to 1,081 last month could not explain the troubling of redundancies.

The cuts came despite efforts by the schools to make up for the Government's failure to fund this year's teachers' pay award by running down their balances, he said.

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the evidence proved that funding pressures were not confined to local authority schools. He added: "All the evidence we have from individual grant-maintained schools and representatives of their association confirms they are just as worried about next year's spending settlement as everybody else, and they have been urging Gillian Shepherd, the Education and Employment Secretary, to fight her corner."

David Whitaker, a consultant dental surgeon and an expert in forensic dentistry, then superimposed the photograph of the skull of Charmaine, whose remains were found at 25 Midland Road in Gloucester, the home of the Wests before they moved to 25 Cromwell Street.

The photographs were shown on a large screen in the court after the curtains had been drawn. Mrs West, who has rarely shown emotion throughout the trial, stared at both photographs.

She has pleaded not guilty to the murder of 10 young women and girls between 1981 and 1987.

Dr Whitaker said that apart from two baby teeth that were missing the photograph of the skull was a perfect match of the photograph

of Charmaine when alive. He estimated that at most she must have been buried within two to three months from when the photograph was taken. "It could be less, almost immediately."

The Home Office pathologist, Bernard Knight, earlier said that he believed the bodies of the nine young women found at 25 Cromwell Street had been deliberately mutilated.

He told Brian Leveson QC, prosecuting, that he could think of no other explanation for the fact that knee caps, fingers, and toes were missing from most of the remains.

Superintendent John Bennett, who has led the investigation, said that bugging devices had been hidden in the various "safe houses" in which Rosemary West stayed when she had been released on police bail following her arrest last year.

Officers had monitored her conversations "for the purpose of seeking intelligence to gain the truth". Mrs West had said nothing incriminating during the buggings, which had lasted for a period of weeks before she was charged.

The devices were hidden in the living rooms and were switched on only during the day.

Mr Leveson closed the prosecution case yesterday. The judge, Mr Justice Mandell, told the jury to try to put the case entirely out of their minds over the weekend.

West jury sees victim's skull

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

ROSEMARY West stared impassively yesterday at a blown-up photograph of the skull of her step-daughter, Charmaine, with whose murder she is charged.

Another photograph — of Charmaine and her sister, Anne Marie — was shown to the jury at Winchester crown court to demonstrate that the girl must have been killed in the early summer of 1971.

In 1971, Charmaine, then aged seven, is smiling and has two upper front teeth missing. The photograph had been taken on April 29, 1971.

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Murdoch in fresh attack on media ownership controls

Andrew Giff Media Correspondent

RUPERT Murdoch's News International has renewed its ferocious attack on the Government's plans to overhaul media ownership laws.

The company said the proposals — which could cap expansion of its broadcasting interests — appeared to be a "solution in search of a problem".

The plans include the creation of an overall media reg-

ulator to police thresholds restricting companies to 10 per cent of the total national media cake.

But in its submission to the Department of National Heritage, the company warned thresholds would create serious dangers for media freedom and economic viability.

News International believed the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission provided the "right institutional environment for regulating this rapidly changing market."

Car pollution dilemma

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

THERE is no safe level for public exposure to the dust from vehicle exhausts known as particulates, according to a report from the World Health Organisation.

The report, released by the National Society for Clean Air at its Scarborough conference yesterday, leaves the Government in difficulty because it has been hoping to set a "safe" level for Britain, as has been done with other pollutants.

According to the report, any level of particulates in the atmosphere causes illness and premature deaths. The dust particles come mostly from diesel but also from petrol engines.

A committee has been working for months to make

recommendations to the Government on air quality, and has come up with limits for sulphur dioxide and other pollutants. However, the particulates have proved more difficult.

Research has shown that particles smaller than 10 microns across, known as PM10s, are sucked deep into the lungs. The immune system thinks they are bacteria and attacks them, causing inflammation which makes asthma and heart problems worse.

The information about particulates and the damage they do is relatively new and leaves the switch to diesel cars encouraged by the Government and some environmental groups looking premature.

Tim Brown, spokesman for the National Society for Clean Air, said that if the Govern-

ment's expert committee now recommended a "safe" limit it would be a political decision, not a medical one. "They should refuse to set a limit and let the Government choose one. The WHO report says that a city of one million people experiencing a three day episode of 50 micrograms per cubic metre of PM10 could expect four extra deaths and 1,000 extra people suffering asthma attacks. These episodes were quite common in the UK."

A recommendation to the Government on particulates is expected next month. A Department of Health committee on the medical effects of particulates is also expected to report soon.

A Department of Environment spokesman said: "We will have to await both reports before making any decisions."

News in brief

Coach deaths crash driver charged

STEPHEN Brown, the driver of a coach in which 13 passengers died when it crashed on the M4 in May, faces a charge of causing death by dangerous driving. His counsel told an inquest at Bristol yesterday.

Coroner Paul Forrest, who adjourned the inquest for a date to be fixed, said the threat of court action against Mr Brown meant inquest proceedings could prejudice a fair trial.

The accident happened when the coach carrying 29 people on a Royal British Legion outing back to Christchurch, Hampshire, from Cardiff, left the motorway. — Keith Harper

Flats killing blame report

TOWER block tenants on an estate in Kirkstall, Leeds — where 74-year-old Edna Cordie was killed in August by a falling slab of concrete — must share responsibility for the tragedy, according to a council report to be published next week.

Residents of Grayson Heights, where youths played daredevil games on the 11-storey-high roof, wedged open doors controlled by an entrapment system, inviting access by unauthorised people, — must share responsibility for the tragedy, according to a council report to be published next week.

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The tenants admit some of the responsibility lies with them, said John Erskine, chairman of the council's tenancy committee. A boy of 10 was charged with manslaughter two days after the incident. — Martin Wainwright

Liverpool 'drugs' shooting

A WOMAN escaped injury in Liverpool yesterday in a shooting thought to be linked to drug-gang rivalry. Five shots were fired at a car parked in the Aigburth area, from another car containing four youths. Armed police later arrested a man. The woman is believed to be the wife of a man charged with attempting to murder alleged gang leader David Ugel, who was shot dead as he drove through the Toxteth area of the city on May 1. Charges against her husband were dropped two weeks ago when a key prosecution witness changed his mind. — David Ward

Arms dump mystery success

PLANS to accelerate a survey of an underwater arms dump met a qualified welcome from Scottish opposition parties yesterday as more incendiary devices were washed up in the Firth of Clyde. In an attempt to quell growing fears that the dumpsters were part of misplaced consignment intended for a 1,600-foot deep trench off the Galloway coast, the Government has ordered scientists to begin a scheduled Spring investigation before Christmas. The SNP claimed credit for the switch, which was announced 17 days after the first of around 4,000 aerosol-sized objects, which ignite when exposed to air, drifted ashore on October 7. Last Friday a four-year-old Campbelltown boy was burned after picking one up. — Eirend Clouston

Birth choices limited

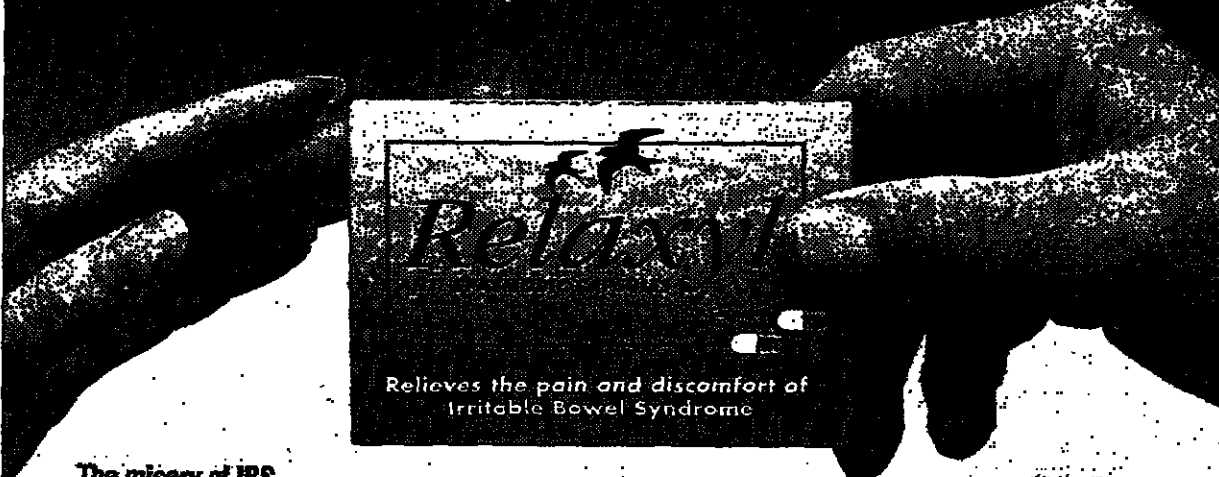
MANY pregnant women are still offered little choice about the type of birth they want for their baby, and some health professionals continue to withhold information, the National Childbirth Trust said yesterday as it published a survey marking the second anniversary of the Government report Changing Childbirth, which called for maternity care to be made more "woman-centred".

The survey, of 850 women who gave birth in November and December last year in the North Essex Health Authority area, found women were not offered a full range of options, with only 13 per cent offered home births. — Chris Mithill

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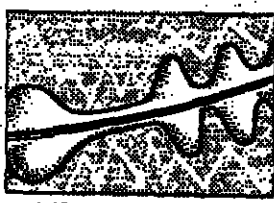
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Birthday binge man, 22, jailed for life over brick murder of shopkeeper

Vivek Chaudhary

AMAN out celebrating his birthday who murdered an Asian shopkeeper was jailed for life yesterday.

Grant Watkins, aged 22, had been drinking heavily at a nightclub when he hurled a brick at Mohan Singh Kullar outside his shop, Swansea crown court heard.

Mr Kullar, aged 60, a former Indian army veteran whose shop had been attacked several times before, suffered a fractured skull and went into a coma, dying nine days later in hospital.

John Williams, QC, prosecuting, said: "The killing of Mr Kullar was the culmination of a deliberate course of conduct directed at his family."

The court heard that five



Mr Kullar's son Rajbir and daughter-in-law Manjiv outside the shop where Mr Kullar, pictured top left, was murdered

men first attacked Mr Kullar's shop at Cimla, near

Neath, West Glamorgan late

at night but ran off when the

alarm sounded. Seven mem-

bers of the Kullar family were

asleep above the shop.

However, three of the gang,

Watkins, Stephen May, aged

23, and Ian Thomas, 21, all

from Cimla, returned with

weapons.

Mr Kullar, who went to in-

vestigate, was confronted by

the three.

Mr Williams said: "Watkins

was armed with a house brick

and threw it at very short

range at the head of Mr

Kullar."

Watkins claimed in court

that he did not intend to

kill but Mr Williams said that

Watkins threw the brick with

such force that he must have

intended serious injury.

May was found guilty of

manslaughter and was jailed

for eight years. Thomas was

cleared of murder but was

jailed for three and a half

years for violent disorder.

Mr Justice Curtis said

while sentencing them: "The

crimes are aggravated by the

fact that they were done in

the knowledge that there had

been previous attacks on this

family and you were adding

to their persecution."

Mr Kullar's son, Rajbir,

said after the case: "We thank

the brave people of the area

for publicly condemning what

took place and especially the

people who gave evidence in

court."

Howard firm on new asylum curbs

Amnesty International challenges clampdown. Alan Travis reports

THE Home Secretary, Michael Howard, insisted yesterday that his clampdown on asylum seekers was justified because Britain had "a real problem" with rising numbers of applicants, of whom only a few were genuine.

"We are seen as a very attractive destination because of the ease with which people can gain access to jobs and benefits. While the number of asylum seekers for the rest of Europe is falling the number in this country is increasing. Only a tiny proportion of them are genuine refugees," he told BBC Radio.

But Amnesty International and other refugee welfare groups said that five years ago, Britain was allowing about 80 per cent of asylum seekers to stay as refugees, or after gaining exceptional leave to remain.

"In the last few years we

have seen a tougher and tougher approach to individual decision making which has led to a culture of disbelief growing up amongst immigration officers," said Richard Dunstan, Amnesty's

refugee officer. As immigration legislation closed all other methods of entry, the numbers applying for asylum rose sharply between 1988 and 1991 to a peak of 44,800. But numbers fell in 1992 and 1993 after measures to deter multiple and other fraudulent applications.

This decline was underlined by the 1993 Asylum Appeals Act which contained many new criteria, raising the hurdle for refugee status.

Amnesty International be-

lieves that it is no coincidence that since July 1993, the proportion of applicants given refugee status or exceptional leave to remain has not exceeded 30 per cent.

Mr Howard is right to argue that the number of asylum seekers being accepted throughout the European Union has fallen in the past two years as restrictions are tightened. But the numbers are simply not comparable to those applying to come to Britain.

Those entering Germany have fallen from 450,000 two years ago to 170,000 in the past 12 months, against Britain's 40,000 applicants.

Arms and asylum, page 9

Gimme shelter

Asylum seekers, UK

Applications 1986-94

Excluding dependants, 000s.

Decisions 1994

Total 21,990

Not recognised as refugees but granted exceptional leave 3,660

Granted asylum 825

Refused 16,500

Source: Home Office

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Refused 16,500

Source: Home Office

Applications 1986-94

Excluding dependants, 000s.

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Halting of forgery trial may land newspaper in court

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

THE Attorney-General, Sir Nicholas Lyell, is considering prosecuting the News of the World for contempt of court over an exposé which led a judge to abort the trial of three forgers.

Sir Nicholas's office wrote to the editor, Phil Hall, on Tuesday, asking him why the action should not go ahead. If convicted, he could be jailed or the paper fined an unlimited amount.

The prosecution, which was halted last July by Judge Hesketh Colgan at Isleworth crown court, west London, is one of three recent cases stopped by judges on the ground that media coverage made a fair trial impossible. Sir Nicholas acted after a complaint from the Crown

Prosecution Service. The three men — Anthony Caldar, Tony Hassan and Doug Lynn — were handed over to police after a two-month investigation uncovered evidence of a £100 million money counterfeiting racket. They were arrested on charges of conspiring to handle large amounts of counterfeit currency.

The judge said he was concerned that the paper printed the men's previous convictions, constantly referred to them as "villains" and attributed a "highly prejudicial" quote about drugs and children to one of them.

Stuart Kuttner, managing editor of the News of the World, said: "The Attorney General will be getting a defence of the News of the World's position. It's a matter in which we regard the public interest as a key element."

Iraqi diplomat expelled

Ian Black and
Richard Norton-Taylor

BRTAIN yesterday ordered the expulsion of an Iraqi diplomat said to have targeted fellow-countrymen opposed to Saddam Hussein.

The Foreign Office announced that Khamis Khalaf Al-Ajili, administrative attaché at the Iraqi interests section in London, had been told to leave the country by October 31.

Officials, providing more details than normal in such cases, said Mr Al-Ajili was in fact a member of Iraq's Directorate of General Intelligence, an organisation known to be responsible for terrorist attacks.

MI5 has been watching him for some time but may only recently have had sufficient

evidence to back up the Government's demand for his expulsion for "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status." He has been in Britain since August 1994.

The Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella organisation of opposition groups, welcomed the move: "It is well known that Saddam Hussein uses Iraq's embassies overseas as bases for international terrorism, threats against the Iraqi opposition, espionage and procurement of weapons of mass destruction."

Iraq severed diplomatic relations with Britain in February 1991 and has since been represented by an interests section operating under the protection of the Jordanian embassy. Yesterday's expulsion reduces its staff to two.

The man in charge, Zuhair Ibrahim, was summoned to

the Foreign Office to be told of the decision. He was not available for comment last night.

Iraqi National Congress sources noted that Latif Yahia, who escaped to Britain after working as a double for Saddam's son Uday, was recently beaten up in London. Mr Al-Ajili was known to Iraqi exile activists.

Security sources made clear that a passage in a recent speech by Shalib Rington in which the head of MI5 spoke of "concerted campaigns by some states to murder their political opponents abroad" was a reference to Iraqi intelligence agents.

The last foreign diplomat expelled from Britain was an Iranian caught in May 1994 distributing forged papers about British policy in Bosnia. The Foreign Office tried but failed to keep that decision secret.

EU scorns Britain's political asylum 'white list'

Officials taken aback reports John Carvel

THE hard men of the European Union interior ministries were astonished yesterday that Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, should be pursuing the idea of declaring Nigeria free from political persecution.

The proposal was dismissed by senior asylum policy officials from all the member states at a meeting in Brussels earlier this month.

The officials met in a secret group called Ciera, the French acronym for the centre for information, discussion and exchange on asylum. It was set up in 1992 to co-ordinate a common EU risk assessment on the extent of persecution in the countries which produced the largest flows of asylum seekers.

A report to the meeting said that the grounds of most asylum applications from Nigeria appeared to be unfounded. A British official

said the Home Office thought Nigerians who were ordinary members of trade unions or professional associations, or who took part in demonstrations against the Government, were not likely to face intimidation or arrest.

Only the leaders of opposition could reasonably be regarded as at risk. The British official stopped short of arguing that Nigeria could therefore be classed as a "safe country" which should be presumed to be incapable of producing refugees under the terms of the 1951 UN convention.

Other member states' officials thought the British analysis to be seriously defective. They agreed there was a persecution risk for large

numbers of Nigerians in vulnerable groups, including members of ethnic minorities, pro-democracy campaigners, human rights activists, and journalists.

Those groups might have a legitimate claim to being persecuted and there could be no question of returning them to Nigeria or failing to give their asylum applications close individual attention, with appropriate safeguards.

They had similar talks in February about Sri Lanka, which is also on Mr Howard's putative "white list" of countries which are to be presumed safe from persecution. None claimed Sri Lanka was safe, although they agreed voluntary repatriations could go ahead.

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Snub to PM fuels crisis

John Hooper
Southern Europe
Correspondent

SPAIN'S scandal-ridden government under Felipe Gonzalez slipped deeper into crisis yesterday when parliament threw out its budget for next year.

The vote was the Socialist prime minister's first parliamentary defeat in the 18 years he has led the country.

But Mr Gonzalez, who for months now has been clinging to power by his fingertips, ruled out any advance on the offer he has already made of a general election next March.

"It always hurts more when it is the first time," he said, with a smile. "You have to know how to win and you have to know how to lose."

The law provides for this year's budget to be rolled over into 1996. But yesterday's vote will mean that planned new projects have to be scrapped, and there is a risk of economic policy going astray.

Financial markets nevertheless shrugged off the vote, which had already been allowed for in lower prices.

Asked what would happen next, the Socialist economics minister, Pedro Solbes, said: "I don't know."

Earlier he had warned that rejection of the budget could prejudice Spain's chances of meeting the targets for European economic and monetary union.

But his pleas fell on deaf ears on left and right alike as the government's opponents united in demanding its resignation.

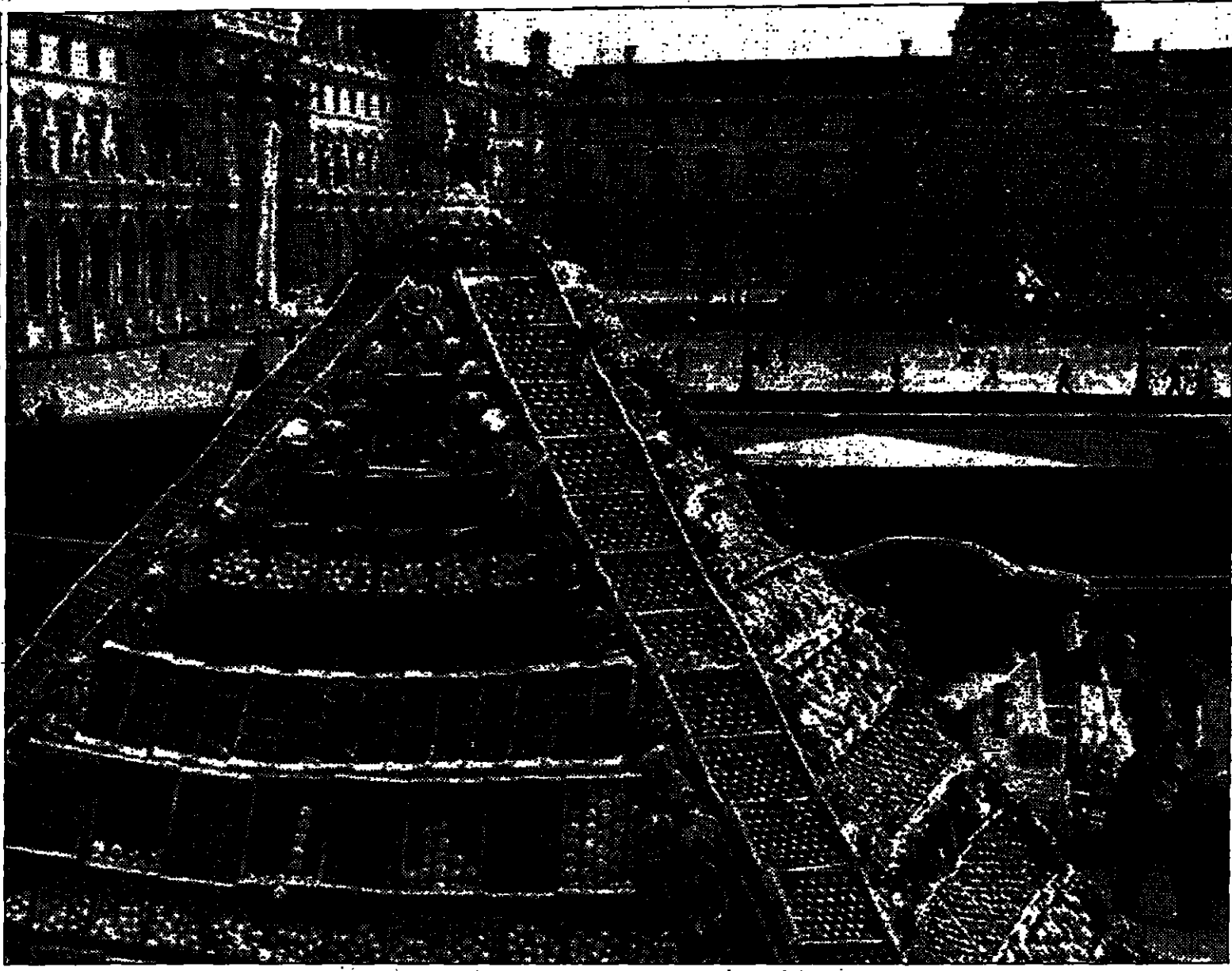
José María Aznar, leader of the main opposition conservative Popular Party, said: "The prime minister has a political obligation to dissolve parliament."

The Socialists ended the budget debate completely isolated. The vote in the 350-seat lower house was 183 to 158, with one abstention.

Two years ago Mr Gonzalez astonished his critics when he led his party, already beset by sleaze claims, to victory in the general election. Although short of an outright majority, the Socialists were able to govern with backing from Catalan nationalists. Last month the Catalans withdrew their support.

The government's position had been made untenable by mounting evidence of official involvement in the 1992 "dirty war" against Basque separatist guerrillas. Evidence against Mr Gonzalez is currently being examined by the supreme court.

Yesterday, a judge charged a former interior minister, José Luis Cordero, and two former officials with misuse of secret funds.



Pointed protest... French farmers against cheaper imports build a pyramid of fruit and vegetables near the Louvre

PHOTOGRAPH MICHEL GANSME

Berlusconi's future in balance as MPs prepare for tight vote

John Hooper in Rome

SILVIO Berlusconi's chances of returning to power before he can be put on trial for bribery rides on a no-confidence vote in the Italian parliament today.

The Italian Republic has come to a perilous juncture in its 50-year history. Just a handful of votes — or even abstentions — could be enough to decide which way the country heads.

By itself, the fate of the non-party government is the least important thing at stake. A result in favour of the right's no-confidence motion would force the prime minister, Lamberto Dini, to submit his resignation. President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro would come under almost irresistible pressure to call a general election for December.

Mr Dini, formerly a central bank senior official, was

asked to form his non-party administration only because it offered a way round a parliamentary deadlock which many on the right believed should have been resolved with fresh elections.

But even if Mr Dini's "cabinet of experts" is re-elected, it has been mortally wounded and is unlikely to survive beyond March.

That would be long enough, however, for two developments threatening Mr Berlusconi with calamity.

The television magnate, who led the country for seven months last year, is due to go on trial for corruption on January 11. He is charged with agreeing to bribery of tax officials and revenue guards in exchange for lenient tax inspections.

A three-month delay would also enable parliament to approve new rules on media access during election campaigns. Mr Dini's stop-gap government, in office for nine months, has not accomplished what many thought its main task: passing a law to curb Mr Berlusconi's political influence on the electorate through a virtual monopoly of commercial television.

Nevertheless, the ever-smiling Mr Berlusconi has been given a golden opportunity to turn the tables on his opponents. Last week he seized on a leftwing motion of no-confi-

dence in a minister supported by the right to present his own motion against the government as a whole.

The man who gave him that opening was the leader of the former communist Democratic Party of the Left, Massimo D'Alema. His future, too, could be at issue in today's vote.

Also at stake will be the Dini government's budget for 1996.

The possibility of the budget sinking has already alarmed investors and set off a slide in the value of the lira. In turn this could saddle the country with higher interest rates which would increase the cost of its borrowing and the volume of its debt.

ominously, the government was forced to borrow at almost half a per cent more in a bond auction yesterday.

In parliament, estimates of the balance of forces all point to a margin of less than half-a-dozen votes.

The fragility of the tycoon's position was underscored yesterday by his foremost ally, the former neo-fascist leader, Gianfranco Fini.

While acknowledging Mr Berlusconi's leadership, he said the right's candidate for the premiership would only be made known "when the order dissolving parliament is published in the Official Gazette".

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World news in brief

US hails Yeltsin's Bosnia peace move

THE United States yesterday hailed a decision by the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, to meet key leaders from Bosnia and Yugoslavia next week, saying Bosnian peace talks would be postponed by a day to allow the meeting.

The postponement, from Tuesday to Wednesday next week, was announced by the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher. The move came amid other signs that the US and Russia could resolve their differences on Bosnia after a summit on Monday in New York.

In Brussels, Nato diplomatic sources said yesterday that Russia might commit an elite force of 2,000 combat troops to Bosnia which would operate in a mixed sector but have its own tactical command. The Russian defence minister, Pavel Grachev, and the US defence secretary, William Perry, are to meet in Washington today.

British forces in Bosnia have a new commander. Brigadier Richard Dannatt takes up a post at Gorzlj Vakuf tomorrow, to lead the United Nations Sector South West as well as British peacekeeping forces throughout former Yugoslavia. — David Fairhall, and agencies in Washington.

Slovak democracy 'suspect'

THE US and the European Union went public yesterday with mounting worries about developments in Slovakia, which has been rocked by feuding and a politically inspired kidnapping.

EU ambassadors in Bratislava told the prime minister, Vladimir Meciar, of "serious concerns" about Slovakia's democracy. The US embassy said President Bill Clinton was also concerned.

Slovakia is an associate member of the EU and would like to join Nato. Last month the Foreign Office made public British fears that the country would not meet the democratic criteria. The worries centre on Mr Meciar's campaign to force President Michal Kovac from office. Britain and other countries believe the state intelligence service was involved in the kidnapping of the president's son.

Slovakia's ethnic Hungarian political parties complain that the government has approved a bill that discriminates against minority languages. — Ian Black, Diplomatic Editor.

Cult guru's trial postponed

JUST 20 hours before he was due to appear in court on charges of mass murder, the doomsday cult guru Shoko Asahara sacked his lawyer, in effect postponing his trial for masterminding the March nerve gas attack on the Tokyo underground, which was due to begin this morning. Japanese legal experts last night doubted whether it could be started this year.

Japan's criminal justice system does not allow someone accused of murder to be without a defence lawyer. One problem for the defence is that Japanese prosecutors have a 99 per cent success rate in criminal cases, which are decided by judges alone.

Last night victims of alleged Aum Shinrikyo atrocities accused Mr Asahara of deliberately delaying the course of justice. Koichi Watanabe, who was in hospital for 20 days after the terror attack said: "This is just a dirty trick of procrastination." Yesterday a group of victims and families of victims of the underground attack brought a civil suit for 600 million yen (\$4.3 million) in damages against Mr Asahara and other Aum Shinrikyo leaders. — Kevin Rafferty, Tokyo.

Tapie faces softer sentence

A FRENCH state prosecutor asked an appeals court yesterday to sentence Bernard Tapie, the former Marseille soccer boss and former cabinet minister, to four months in jail with 14 months suspended, for rigging a match.

The request would soften a sentence of one year in prison with another year suspended imposed by a lower court in May for bribing players of the rival Valenciennes team to lose a 1994 league game to Marseille. Tapie denies the charges.

The prosecutor, Luc Fremont, urged the court to rule that Tapie, aged 55, who faces legal actions over his handling of business empire, "is incapable to hold down his public office for three years."

Tapie, who has remained at large pending appeal, is still a Radical Party member of the national assembly and of the European Parliament. — Rainer, David, France.

Icewoman discovered

THE frozen remains of a young woman, apparently sacrificed to Inca gods about 500 years ago, have been uncovered on a 20,700 ft summit in the Peruvian Andes. The well-preserved body (left) was wrapped in finely woven wool, wearing an elaborate feather headdress and surrounded by ceramics and statues.

Two more, less well-preserved, bodies were also discovered. Scientists hope frozen organs, tissues and fluids in the bodies will yield DNA for genetic studies. — New York Times.

Housewives seek recognition

HOUSEWIVES are to launch a global defence of their calling at their first world congress, starting today in Buenos Aires. Argentina's powerful League of Housewives is hosting the event, which brings together 150 delegates from 14 countries, including France, Britain, and the United States.

The congress, entitled *Housewives: Citizens of the World*, would like to see home management recognised as a profession in its own right. — Noli Scott, Sao Paulo.

Fugitive 'dressed as woman'

VILLAGERS in a remote part of Saudi Arabia have said they saw a man suspected of bombing a crowded mosque and now on the run dressed up as a woman, a Saudi newspaper reported yesterday. Arab News said villagers spotted Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Sa'ad al-Anzi in a bedouin region 50 miles from Bisha, where the attack in which eight people died took place last Friday.

Survivors have told of how the bomber looked the door of the mosque in the incident in Quba village. Moving swiftly to quell speculation of political dissent, the government alleged that Mr Anzi had been involved in a land dispute. — Rainer, Dubai.

Chirac woos Kohl on EU

Ian Traynor in Bonn

PRESIDENT Jacques Chirac of France arrived here last night hoping to persuade increasingly sceptical German leaders that he shares their vision of a federal Europe and is committed to the fiscal rigour needed to join a single European currency by the end of the millennium.

Amid growing German anxiety that France under Mr Chirac is ditching the close partnership essential to the future of the European Union, he and his host, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, were expected to concentrate on seeking a common platform for next year's inter-governmental conference to chart the EU's future.

But Paris and Bonn appear divided on the central issues: concerted foreign and security policies; an end to the national veto in EU decision-making; expansion of the EU to the former communist east;

the criteria for a single currency; and common immigration, asylum and anti-crime policies to enable open borders between them.

German jitters have been made worse by Mr Chirac's single-minded pursuit of his nuclear testing in the South Pacific. The French president crossed the Rhine last night against a backdrop of a huge Greenpeace protest banner.

The German government is wary of upsetting Mr Chirac on the nuclear issue, for fear of scuppering the EU alliance.

Mr Kohl needs for his dream of a European federation to come true. But the chancellor and the Bundesbank are also insisting on the strictest interpretation of the economic terms for monetary union.

The main question is whether Mr Chirac, confronted by social unrest at the prospect of austerity policies, will be able to reduce his current budget deficit of 55 per cent to the 3 per cent required for EMU membership.

The Organisation for Eco-

nomic Co-operation and Development recently raised doubts of France's chances of meeting the 3 per cent ceiling, and on Tuesday Germany's six leading economic think-tanks added their voices to the doubting chorus.

Theo Waigel, the finance minister, said Germany would not insist on a rigorous application of the EMU terms, but would also demand a further agreement likely to toughen the conditions for a single currency.

Reuter adds from Brindisi, Italy: Activists from Greenpeace accused commandos from a French destroyer of committing an "act of war" yesterday after they boarded a boat belonging to the environmental group in this southern Italian port.

About 20 commandos from the destroyer Duplex raided the Greenpeace boat, Altair, breaking windows and hurling tear gas grenades, after protesters had painted anti-nuclear slogans on the docked destroyer's side.

Pakistan risks sanctions

Julie Wolf in Brussels

THE European Commission is considering launching an investigation into forced child labour in Pakistan, the first test of controversial European Union legislation linking trade concessions to developing countries with their labour standards.

Such a move could put Brussels in conflict with EU countries such as Britain and Germany, which are hesitant about using trade sanctions against developing countries.

EU sources said that in two recent meetings the British and German governments urged the commission to take a cautious line on the Pakistan case, although the two have not so far come out firmly against an investigation. France and southern European countries want an inquiry, the sources said. British officials declined

to comment, but a commission spokesman said the subject was "highly sensitive" and unlikely to be resolved soon. Although the commission does not have to heed the views of EU governments, it is unlikely to act unless there is wide member state backing for an inquiry.

The commission is being pressed to act by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Trade Union Confederation, which submitted complaints against Pakistan and Burma earlier this year.

Under legislation which took effect in January, the EU can withdraw tariff reductions granted to developing countries through its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) if an investigation finds proof of forced labour.

This "social clause" was adopted despite opposition from the British government, which abstained on

the GSP rules, arguing that withdrawing trade privileges would do little to end human rights abuses.

The Pakistani government argues that it is working hard to end bonded labour, which became illegal in 1992. "We believe we are doing enough," said Riaz Mohammad Khan, Pakistan's ambassador to the EU. He said that in the past year there had been 3,000 inspections resulting in about 1,000 prosecutions.

International agencies believe that millions of children and adults are employed as bonded labourers in Pakistan, making carpets, textiles, sports goods and bricks.

The unions' report contains chilling interviews with children in bonded labour. Under this system, parents trade their children's services for a loan. Because the debt is passed on after a person's death, families can remain in debt for generations.

Un Premio Nacional a Idiomas para las Exportaciones (National Languages for Export Award) indica a sus competidores y clientes extranjeros que su empresa enfoca con seriedad el comercio en el exterior. Indica que su empresa comprende lo que significan la cultura y los idiomas extranjeros. (En un mercado cada vez más competitivo, es un activo cada vez más útil.) Si su empresa obtiene un premio, usted puede utilizar el logotipo de la izquierda. Los ganadores reciben asimismo un trofeo y un galardón. Si cree que su empresa reúne las condiciones necesarias para obtener un premio o si desea mayor información acerca de cómo los idiomas extranjeros pueden ayudarle a lograr una ventaja competitiva, llame al 0117 921 7171. (A propósito, eso es lo que dice abajo en inglés.)



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dti

Department of Trade and Industry

Financial turmoil as separatists take lead in polls

Panic as Quebec momentum grows

Jonathan Freedland
in Quebec City

CANADA'S prime minister, Jean Chrétien, was due to deliver an emergency address to the nation last night as the growing momentum towards Quebec's independence caused panic.

With polls giving separatists a narrow lead in Monday's referendum on sovereignty for the French-speaking province, Quebecers jammed passport offices and triggered a run on the banks as they sought to take precautions against a Yes vote, fearing they could soon lose their rights as Canadians and end up in a break-away state.

Thousands sought to renew their Canadian passports, despite reassurances from separatist leaders that they will be able to keep them even after independence, officials said.

"We've seen dramatic increases in volume in the last few days — easily double, if not triple," said Jennifer Sloan, spokeswoman for Canada's foreign affairs and international trade department.

Financial experts pleaded for calm yesterday as banks in Quebec reported a record surge in requests to transfer funds out of the province. Turnover in the financial markets was eased only when the provincial government bought up hundreds of millions of Canadian dollars in an attempt to stabilise the currency.

Under pressure to reverse the sudden pro-independence surge, Mr Chrétien invoked emergency legislation to make an "urgent address to the nation".

The outspoken separatist leader, Jacques Bouchard, was due to deliver the reply. Clearly alarmed by the dramatic advance in the independence movement, the prime minister sought to win over Quebecers with concessions.

Thousands sought to renew Canadian passports, despite reassurances from separatist leaders

On Tuesday night he told a mass rally of federalists in Montreal that he accepted Quebec's demand to be recognised as a "distinct society", and promised that any changes in constitutional jurisdiction for Quebec would only be made with the consent of Quebecers.

But critics said Mr Chrétien had not gone far enough to assuage separatist opinion, because he had stopped short of allowing Quebec "distinct" status to be written into the constitution and had not guaranteed a constitutional veto for the province, which has a quarter of Canada's population.

Once ridiculed as a dull

replay of the 1980 referendum — when independence was rejected by a 60-40 margin — the current campaign is now in high gear. "Oui" and "Non" signs are everywhere.

In a departure from Canada's usually temperate mood, 12,000 advocates of continued union filed a Montreal audition on Tuesday, waving red and white flags.

Mr Chrétien, himself a Quebec native, said the country was threatened with destruction. "And not just any country. Canada is a country that is unique in the world, the best in the world."

But the energy is now clearly with the "sovereignists". Led by the charismatic Mr Bouchard, they have mobilised to avoid the mistake of 1980, when they let an initial lead slip away in the campaign's final stretch. A registration drive has boosted the number of eligible voters beyond 5 million, in a province of 7 million people.

Separatists received a further boost from the French president, Jacques Chirac, when he appeared to say he would recognise an independent Quebec.

Evoking memories of Charles de Gaulle's declaration "Vive le Québec libre!", Mr Chirac told CNN: "If the referendum is positive, then the [French] government will recognise the fact, of course."

French officials later said the comment was not intended as a promise of recognition, and that France would not interfere.



Fate of a nation... Canada's prime minister, Jean Chrétien, a Quebecer trying to save the union, leaves parliament in Ottawa

WORLD NEWS 7

Vote-rigging row adds spice to Zanzibar's poll

Chris McGreal
in Dar-es-Salaam

TANZANIA'S first free presidential election was thrown into jeopardy yesterday when the leading opposition candidate threatened to withdraw.

Augustine Mrema, who heads the National Convention for Reconstruction and Reform, said he would quit unless the government admitted defeat in last weekend's closely-fought and highly-disputed election for control of the tiny islands of Zanzibar.

On Zanzibar, the swearing-in of a new president was postponed because the ruling party and its opponents claimed they were victims of fraud, even though no final tally has been released.

Zanzibar's vote on Sunday for their own government before joining the rest of Tanzania to choose a national president and parliament this weekend. But Sunday's vote could descend into farce if Mr Mrema does pull out. He and his supporters argue that if the government is permitted to get away with fixing Zanzibar's election, it could open the way for vote-rigging on the mainland.

The Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), once the only legal party, controls both the island and national governments. An incomplete count in Zanzibar gave it a razor-thin majority over the Civic United Front (CUF), which promises greater autonomy for the islands.

Before the electoral commission stopped releasing results, the parties were almost evenly matched in the parliamentary election.

That made the presidential race crucial, not just for control of the executive but —

because the victor appoints 10 additional MPs — to swing the balance of power in parliament.

The CCM is not inexperienced in election rigging. Even under one-party rule, ballot boxes were switched to strengthen public endorsement of the president or to favour one candidate over another. Suspicion that history was repeating itself on Zanzibar was raised when at the last minute the authorities turned down a British government offer to print the ballot papers.

The CCM candidate, the incumbent Zanzibar president Salim Amour, yesterday demanded complete nullification of the election and fresh voting in three to six months. In the meantime, the CCM said, President Amour should remain in power.

Opposing politicians sounded increasingly threatening last night as they besieged the electoral commission to press their causes. But there was still no clear picture of who the commission was likely to declare president, or if it would do so at all.

On the mainland, Mr Mrema's campaign committee chairman, Mwesiga Buregu, feared vote-rigging on Zanzibar was just of taste of things to come. Mr Mrema said he would withdraw from Sunday's election unless the government recognised the opposition victory or met CUF demands for a recount and release of the electoral rolls so that names ticked off as having voted could be checked against the number of ballots cast.

If Mr Mrema does withdraw, it will be a severe and perhaps fatal blow to the credibility of Tanzania's elections which, as on Zanzibar, are closely fought.

West Bank welcomes advent of PLO police

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

THE long-delayed dismantling of Israeli occupation in the West Bank began yesterday as five Palestinian policemen, the first to be deployed outside the Jericho enclave, arrived to a rapturous reception in the northern town of Jenin.

The five men, brandishing Kalashnikov rifles, were greeted by a chanting crowd, and scores of Israeli troops sent to keep order.

Up to 1,000 of Yasser Arafat's PLO security forces are expected to take up positions in and around Jenin before the end of the year. The Israeli army will pull out by mid-November.

The five policemen were accompanied by Brigadier Ziad al-Atrash, who heads the Palestinian team in the security liaison committee, a key element in the self-rule deal agreed last month.

The deal provides for a phased Israeli military withdrawal from six West Bank cities: Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Ramallah. Israel will also hand over Hebron, except for the city centre.

Mr Arafat, who predicted in an interview on United States television on Tuesday night that there would be a sovereign Palestinian state within two years, has for the moment to share power.

Meanwhile the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, has announced that he is suspending his drive to expel Palestinian workers for three to six months. But he warned that he would resume the expulsions if the world did not acknowledge the right of "all these people to return to their Palestinian land".

Thousands of Palestinians were stranded on Libya's Egyptian border when Col Gaddafi signalled his displeasure with the self-rule deal.

President Bill Clinton is to use a waiver provision to delay moving the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to the disputed city of Jerusalem, the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, said yesterday.

Earlier yesterday, Syria bitterly attacked the US in the wake of Tuesday's congressional vote to move the embassy to Jerusalem by May 1999.

Australia's ruling Labour Party accused of sleaze

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AUSTRALIA'S Labour government has been accused of sleaze after yesterday's activities after offering business executives \$10,000 meetings with the prime minister, Paul Keating.

It also offered private enterprise the chance to sponsor drinks with senior ministers after a cabinet meeting for \$5,000.

The scheme was revealed in a leaked memo from a Queensland public relations firm, Marketplace Communications, which the Labour Party has admitted asking to make the offers.

"It's as if the cabinet of this country is up for a few pieces of silver," said Tim Fischer, leader of the National Party. "There's a touch of sleaze associated with this latest effort by the ALP [Australian Labour Party]."

The Democrats, who are powerful in the senate, called the scheme "rent-a-cabinet" and said it could lead to MPs accepting money to raise matters in Question Time, as had happened in Britain.

"We've seen the ultimate asset sale — of the prime minister and cabinet," said Cheryl Kernot, the Democrats' leader, who revealed the memo.

She has also put forward a code of conduct for MPs. A senior minister has admitted that the ALP blundered in suggesting that meetings with Mr Keating could be bought, and said no such meetings had taken place.

"I think they [the party] just need to draw a proper line of distinction as to where party starts and finishes," said Robert Ray, the acting senate leader.

But the ALP's federal secretary, Gary Gray, said the only mistake had been the company's "clumsy wording" of the offer.

Australian intelligence agencies are closely monitoring a growing threat from violent anti-Asian, rightwing and religious extremist groups, outlined in their annual report to parliament, Mr Keating said yesterday.

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G2 cover story

Militant Christianity?

Is the C of E really the victim of a liberal landslide?

DRAMATIC reports in the right-wing press this week claim that the Church of England has been taken over by liberals and that the traditional Catholic wing has been routed in elections for the new General Synod. The true faith, these reports go on to imply, is therefore in danger. Not only do the results allegedly sound the death-knell for traditionalist Anglo-Catholicism on the Church's governing body, they also in some unspecified way threaten the very core of Christian morality itself. The authority of scripture in Church teaching and the future of the Book of Common Prayer are said to be under siege. Liberalism militant (gay rights a speciality) apparently threatens the future of the Anglican Communion as we have known it.

This is strong stuff and, if it is true, it would be full of interest and concern not only to practising Anglicans but to anyone else who possesses a sense of the importance of British institutions, which is to say almost all of us. But is it true? Is this actually the turning point that some are suggesting? Has the Church of England really fallen victim to a defining liberal landslide? And — though this is a different sort of question — would it even be such a disaster if it were so? At this point it is necessary to stand back and consider a few facts which may moderate the impression of an institution in epical crisis.

First, the full results of the election of the new General Synod are not yet all available; the final list of Synod members elected by the nearly 40,000 people eligible to vote has not even been collated and will not be available until later this week. Second, Synod elections are not contested on a party basis but by individuals within dioceses, some of whom organise in common but most of whom do not; almost 50 per cent of the membership of the new Synod — the sixth to be elected since the governance

of the Church of England was reformed in 1970 — are first-time members whose allegiances to the different tendencies within the Church, let alone votes on particular issues, are by no means easy to predict. Third, although the composition of the Synod is a complex business — the three houses of bishops, clergy and laity are elected in slightly different ways — all voting is by proportional representation under the single transferable vote system; in other words there could be no better institutional guarantee that all shades of opinion will be represented and protected in the Synod's broad church.

This is not to say that there may not be a significant shift of opinion taking place in the modern Church. The gay issue in particular is genuinely divisive, although not neatly along traditionalist-liberal lines. But it is to raise a very sceptical eyebrow at this week's tendentious reports. For example, it is mischievous to highlight one fact — that the number of traditional Catholics elected this time (who among other things oppose the ordination of women) is said to have declined from around 170 to around 70 — without at the same time making clear that many fewer such candidates actually stood this time round and that traditionalists topped the poll this year in some dioceses anyway. Similarly it is misleading to pretend that the traditionalist group are the sole representatives of the so-called Catholic heritage, when there are others who claim to be within that tradition too. Finally, for every departing traditionalist like the well-known George Austin there may be a less widely known arriving traditionalist like the Rev Stephen Trott or Sir Patrick Cormack MP. It may suit the agenda of the right-wing press to portray the Church of England as an institution in terminal crisis. But it does not square with the facts.

Disasters waiting to happen

Decisive action is needed to make nuclear reactors safe

AFICIONADOS of Armenian history may know that Metsamor is a village considered to have been the birthplace of the Armenian people. Today Metsamor matters to all of us, not because of its history, but because it has a perilous nuclear plant whose reactors have just been activated against the advice of every Western expert familiar with its construction. The International Atomic Energy Authority in Vienna has begged and hectored earthquake-prone Armenia not to restart reactors already closed down once, in 1993, for safety concerns. The plant does not even have a sarcophagus to act as a shield against leaks. The Armenian capital, Yerevan, is at risk. But so are more distant countries, Britain included. Armenian officials, unimpressed, argue that the country cannot live through another winter without adequate supplies of energy, and that in any case, Western protests are suspect because they are motivated by commercial considerations to secure business for some of the commercial giants in search of lucrative contracts to repair faulty reactors.

Metsamor is only the newest recruit to the Chernobyl syndrome. Indeed Chernobyl itself remains dangerously defective and poses risks every bit as great as the nuclear fall-out in 1986. Also among the front runners for red alert are Kozloduy in Bulgaria, Kola in North-Western Russia and Ignalina in Lithuania. Study after study has shown that these are accidents waiting to hap-

pen. Western experts assert that the best course is to shut the plants down; failing that, safety devices must be reinforced. The standard response from the countries concerned has been to argue that they lack resources both to deal with the defaults or to develop alternative energy resources. Either the rich industrialised countries come up with funds and expertise, or they must accept the risks that nuclear accidents in the East hold for the health and well-being of the wider world. The dilemma is not new. The G7 countries and the EU have been agonising about this for almost a decade; but have been inexcusably slow in taking decisive action. One reason is that the sums involved run into billions. But another is competition to do the work between the US, Japan and the EU countries and between the nuclear industry's giants, such as Westinghouse and Siemens and GEC. Instead of pulling together to draw up a master plan of action, there has been endless hickering, and less than \$700 million has been committed so far. This is irresponsibility of the highest degree. Public opinion has been rightly outraged by French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. But it is just as important to realise that it is high noon for the Chernobyls of the former Soviet Republic and of Eastern Europe. The international community must take preventive action before Metsamor and its ilk go down in history not as obscure places on the map but as disasters affecting mankind.

Will Ms Bennet marry Mr Darcy?

Rush to buy the video! Or will the BBC do the decent thing?

SOME FIFTY thousand people have bought the BBC video of Andrew Davies's Sunday night TV series, *Pride and Prejudice*, mainly because they can't wait to find out whether or not the delectable Elizabeth Bennet will marry scowling, brooding Mr Darcy. The omens don't look too good. As the Daily Telegraph noted yesterday, an engagement between the two seemed further off than ever last Sunday, as Elizabeth's sister Lydia disgraced the Bennet family by eloping with Mr Wickham.

We take a less pessimistic view of the couple's chances. True, when he heard of Lydia's elopement, Darcy fell into a fearful fit of brooding and scowling, suggesting he no longer wished to entrust his fortunes to a family of such grubby repute. But subsequent scenes, which showed Darcy brooding and scowling in front of various pubs, suggested that Davies has a surprise concealed up his sleeve. We suspect he

intends a denouement this coming Sunday in which Darcy will be instrumental in contriving a happy outcome to Lydia's misbehaviour. Were this to happen, it would surely be possible for Darcy to marry Elizabeth; while Elizabeth would at last understand that Darcy, far from merely descending after the untoward news of Lydia's elopement into paroxysms of brooding and scowling, had exerted every effort on behalf of the stricken family.

It is not for us to second-guess the intentions of writers as distinguished as Mr Davies. It is possible that, as with *Middlemarch*, he intends a less exuberant outcome. But — as *Middlemarch* showed — producers in such enterprises look for a happy ending, especially for the American market. We believe he will do the decent thing by Elizabeth. If he doesn't, we plan to brood and scowl for the rest of this year.



Letters to the Editor

The asylum appeals go on

WE ARE alarmed at the Government's reported intention to announce a "white list" of countries, aimed at barring asylum-seekers from Nigeria, Algeria and Sri Lanka (Refugees face "white list" test, October 25). Quite apart from our objections to any breach of the principle that asylum applications should be judged on their individual merits, we would strongly oppose the inclusion of these countries in the list.

The present regime in Nigeria is among the most repressive in the world. It has endured in the 25 years of military rule since independence. To presume that there is no general persecution in a country where political dissidents have been murdered, where detainees are tortured — as the alleged "coup plotters" have revealed — and four journalists have just been given 15-year prison sentences is beyond belief.

Among the victims of the repression are the former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo and his deputy, General Shehu Yar'Adua; Dr Boko Ransome-Kuti, Sylvester Odion Akhaine, and Shehu Sani, of the Campaign for Democracy; Chris Anyanwu, publisher of *TIM* magazine; Kule Ajiade, co-editor of *The News* magazine; Ken Saro-Wiwa, president of Mosop; and of course the winner of the annual election of June 13 1993, Chief M K O Abiola. Altogether there are at least 90 political prisoners, according to the Lagos-based Civil Liberties Organisation.

In addition, many prominent Nigerians are already living in forced exile. They include Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka, former foreign minister Bola Ajakaiye and Senator Bola Tinubu, against whom charges of treason were brought when he sought to reconvene the Senate after its dissolution by the military. His case, and that of five other Senators charged with the same offence, is before the Human Rights Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The identification of

Nigeria as a country from which asylum applicants are presumed to be without merit will be used by the military regime to validate its continuing persecution of human rights workers, political opponents, and journalists. It will be produced as evidence to refute criticisms of the regime which are likely to be made at the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Auckland. It will disavow all those inside Nigeria who were hoping for support for their demands that the sentences passed by the secret military tribunal be quashed, and a realistic programme for the restoration of democracy be adopted. We hope that, if the Government persists with this unfortunate proposal, it will be rejected by Parliament.

Lord Avebury, Chairman, Parliamentary Human Rights Group, Rt Hon Lord Merlyn-Rees, Former Home Secretary, Tony Lloyd MP, Labour Foreign Affairs Spokesman, Menzies Campbell MP, Lib Dem Foreign Affairs Spokesman, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Parli. Human Rights Group, Sir Brian Bender KCMB, British High Commissioner in Nigeria, 1988-91, Lord Dubs, Former Dir., Refugee Council, Nick Hardwick, Director, Refugee Council, (Dr) Frances D'Sonza, Director, Article XIX, Lotte Leicht, Human Rights Watch, Ken Wiwa, The Ogoni Foundation, Richard Bourne, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Chief John Oyegun, NDCN, (Dr) Kayode Fayemi, Editor, *Nigeria Now*, Senator Bola Tinubu.

THE list of supposedly "safe" countries coupled with measures to cut benefits to most asylum-seekers, will see the complete demolition of a system put in place to

protect those fleeing from persecution.

Amnesty International has well-documented accounts of the human-rights violations committed in all three countries you list. Nigeria is going through its most serious human-rights crisis in more than 30 years. More than 40,000 Algerians have been killed since the cancelled elections in 1992 and there is a spiral of political violence. In Sri Lanka, there are continuing reports of arrest and "disappearance". It is patently ridiculous to suggest that asylum-seekers from such countries cannot have genuine claims.

The Government proclaims its commitment to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, but what we are seeing is a complete abdication of its responsibilities under international law. Every asylum-seeker has the right to have his or her claim judged on its individual merits. The blanket policy of a "white list" violates this right.

The Government is scapegoating refugees in order to hide the failings and inefficiencies of its own department. Despite huge increases in personnel, the number of cases dealt with by the Home Office asylum division has fallen in each of the last two years — from 35,000 in 1992 to 21,000 in 1994. Delays in reaching initial decisions remain unacceptably long. It is these inefficiencies — and the resultant wastage of public funds — that ministers should be addressing.

Jan Shaw, Refugee officer, Amnesty International, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RE.

MY grandparents came to this country as refugees from Eastern Europe at the turn of the century as, I guess, did Michael Howard's. Would our grandparents have been allowed to stay under these new regulations? Ray Sylvester, Stanton Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 5FY.

Meadowdale's child-abuse scandal: the inquest starts here

WORKERS in residential units for vulnerable children need to be well trained and supported (Social service director quits, October 25). The opposite is the case: they are among the poorest paid, almost always unqualified and poorly supervised.

It must now be clear to everyone involved, including the Department of Health, that the regulation of such workers and units cannot be left to the discretion of local authorities, or to the private or voluntary sector agencies, which run them.

We have no way of knowing to where the perpetrators of such abuse have moved. Are they working with other vulnerable children at this moment? For years, the Government has opposed the introduction of a General Council to regulate social workers. It is now considering such a body, but this is too slow and too late. The Government has the blueprint; it needs to announce the formation of such a council forthwith.

Brian Littlechild, Chair, Criminal Justice Sub-Committee, British Assoc. of Social Workers, 5 Boundary Drive, Bengeo, Hertford, Herts SG14 3JG.

HOW many more reports of victimisation against adults and children with learning difficulties must there be before the Crown Prosecution Service assumes a proper responsibility for achieving justice for them?

From my recent research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation I found a stark difference with the US, where prosecutors must see how they can prosecute. Here, say CPS officers, decisions often rest on "intuition" or "a gut feeling", and, in my opinion, prejudice. The CPS often functions, in effect, as the defence. As a result, the police do not refer cases to the CPS, staff do not report to the police, and victims do not tell staff their fears.

(Dr) Christopher Williams, Research Officer, Global Security Programme, University of Cambridge, Cambridge CB2 3RE.

STUDIES show that disabled children are up to five times more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. Most child-protection policies in social services barely mention the specific needs of disabled children — which are very different to

those of non-disabled children. Police see them as less credible in the courts so prosecutions are rare. They are considered to be attention-seeking and any indications of abuse are considered a feature of disability. For example, a bruise or mark is explained away as a self-injury.

How do we keep a group of children safe whom nobody wants? As long as society sees them as second-class citizens in a country which as yet does not have any anti-discrimination laws for disabled people, the Meadowdales will continue.

The Department of Health may well be shocked by Meadowdale but it did nothing to rescue the excellent child-protection project for deaf children run by the National Deaf Children's Society which had to close because of lack of funds (a lottery casualty). Margaret Kennedy, Let's Balance The Scales For Disabled Children, 5 Albion Works, Sigdon Road, London E8 1AP.

BETWEEN the ages of seven and 15, I was in the care of both local authority and Barnardo's homes. No, I was not abused; my family lost its home. By today's measures, many of my "uncles" and "aunts" in the homes would be designated unqualified. Yet they lacked nothing. I certainly didn't like all of them but I respected them all. They gave me my values, my foundation for life. They encouraged my enquiring mind, ensuring that I was able to read several national newspapers daily, and broke the rules so that I could listen to the later radio programmes.

I was shown tenderness and affection. A cuddle and a peck-on-the-cheek from an uncle, or a hug and a chat on the knee of an uncle, were considered to be sexual abuse then — it was called TLC.

No member of staff, at any time, in any of the homes was violent to us, nor did they make sexual advances to us or give us fellow residents and me the slightest cause for concern about our personal safety. On the contrary, we viewed them as our protectors, a role which they fulfilled to the hilt.

Paul Davies, Acton Reynald, Shrewsbury SY4 4DS.

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Scratched out

EACH time I present my benefits cheque at the local sub-post office, I run the gamut of tempting adverts for the National Lottery. And, believe me, it is a temptation when collecting £45 Income Support. I just can't resist 21 per cent on Saturday's draw; well, there's no harm in it, is there?

Those bloody Scratch Cards are, however, another matter entirely. By offering the chance of an instant win of up to £50,000, they are all but irresistible to us financially challenged. Every time I've won £1 or £2 I reinvest until it's all gone. I've a feeling I'm not the only one. Well, it's not really gambling, is it? Not those pretty little cards winking at you from beyond a tube of Snarfers or a book of second-class stamps.

So, I'll have to survive on baked beans until my next benefit cheque; but I'll still produce less hot air than a barrel-load of Bottomleys. Name and address supplied.



Second bite of a dodgy sarnie

YOUR story on Marks & Spencer withdrawing thousands of sandwiches (Return of the Ratner factor as salmonella is found at Marks & Spencer's suppliers, October 25) reminded me of my own earlier experience. On June 26, 1983, my husband and I bought four packs of sandwiches from M&S in Norwich. After eating the fresh salmon, cucumber and chili sandwich, I was ill. My husband had eaten the same food

as myself except the salmon sandwich. I retrieved the box tops from the bin and sent these to M&S.

Their response was almost exactly the same as yesterday — no complaints had been received. There was no apology. A £10 token was enclosed to express their "goodwill". It was not accepted. Sheila McAfee Hart, Kingswood, Horsham, Sussex, Suffolk IP21 6AS.

Kingsley, the kindly prefect

ITOO remember Kingsley Amis (Letters, October 25) as a junior prefect presiding at our dining table when the City of London School was evacuated to Marlborough College early in the war. He seemed to be a kind, "jolly uncle" sort of prefect, different to the others, who were perhaps less sure of themselves.

At the end of one term when other boys were pursuing members of the first XI or XV for their autographs, I asked Amis for his.

Years later, when I was trying to place my book, I wrote to him. He gave me the name of his agent and, in a PS, advised selling the autograph, adding that I might get 50p for it. Amis was not the curmudgeon he appeared to be. I am sure this was only his method of self-protection.

M J Stewart, 48a Croydon Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3PR.

A Country Diary

SELBORNE, HANTS: The country's best-known ancient yew, blown down in Gilbert White's village in the January 1890 storm, then winched back into position in what proved a vain attempt to save its life, is beginning to take on the rather safe and mellow aspect of a picturesque garden ornament. The shelved surfaces inside the hollow trunk have a lustrous, papery finish, like wasps' nests. Foxgloves have seeded themselves in pockets of rotting wood, and an exotic honey-suckle is beginning to cloak the fluted exterior of the shell. Nearby, a rooted cutting from the tree is beginning to poke out of its tree-guard. They are only 20 yards apart, but the difference between their ages remains tantalisingly uncertain. All mature yews become hollow, so dating by ring-count is impossible. Allen Meredith, who has meticulously studied the sizes, positions and archaeological associations of ancient British yews, has produced a graph linking girth and age, which put the 25ft Selborne

tree at 1400 years. But it is, in its details, a pretty speculative relationship. There is no living heartwood from British yews much older than 400 years, no datable ancient timbers (as there are for most other species). No one is sure, yet, at what age yews begin to hollow, or when or why they go into slow growth mode (the Selborne tree put on just 10 inches in its last hundred years). All that is certain is that there are some 500 ancient yews surviving in Britain, almost all in churchyards and almost all probably much older than the churches themselves. Some connection with ancient religion seems certain. But the planting of wild tree species was unknown before the Middle Ages — which suggests that sacred sites were situated close to existing trees. Yet 600 churches really have wedged their buildings into already established ground-plans? For all the information accumulated about them, ancient yews remain trees of mystery.

RICHARD MABBY

Diary

Matthew Norman

LAST week's Shadow Cabinet elections brought with them the usual whispers of devious plotting against the leadership. The most notable revolved around the re-election of Old Labour character Tom Clarke, at the expense of that lovable firebrand Jack Cunningham. Rumour had it that a disaffected Gordon Brown maneuvered to embarrass Mr Tony Blair by lurching him with Mr Clarke. I am pleased today to quash this malicious nonsense: Mr Brown is on splendid terms with Mr Blair, and would never countenance such Machiavellian scheming even if he were not. Meanwhile, earlier this week, two men fancied a coffee in a parliamentary building on Millbank. They went to an obscure and quiet sixth-floor cafe — so quiet, in fact, that only two other people were present. Can we guess the identity of this duo? No doubt Mr Brown was telling Mr Clarke why under no circumstances would he have dreamt of helping him to be re-elected to the Shadow Cabinet.

My friend Terry Major-Bailings, sounding a little low even though his long-awaited TV film is on BBC2 tonight. He was in a good mood until 10 minutes ago, he tells me, but then he read Lynda Lee-Potter's column in the Daily Mail. Lynda was absolutely beastly, accusing him of enjoying the limelight, and of building his own fame entirely upon his famous little brother. "Actually, I'm not too bothered, because she does write such rubbish, doesn't she?" says Terry. "I always call her Lynda Lee-Potter. I know it's not very gallant, but I'm a little bit naughty like that." Upon this caustic note, we say farewell.

MARGARET Hodge is interviewed in that cathedral of heavy-weight political writing, Good Housekeeping magazine. It is a distressing stuff. Describing Westminster as "the worst boy's club", the close friend and fellow neighbour of Mr Tony Blair explains why being a Labour backbencher is jolly rotten. "There is enormous competitiveness. If you've managed to put a minister on the spot, you don't get any kudos for it, only envy." Oh dear. "It's the most gossipy, sniping, backbiting place." Oh dear, oh dear. "There's no celebration of other people's successes, no pulling together. I don't like the way I'm always having to look over my shoulder." Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Her mutual loathing for Judith Church (her neighbouring MP in Dagenham) is well known, but it's upsetting that she feels this way about everyone else. Poor Mags. The Diary adviser to all our horrid Labour MPs out there — yes, you too Judith Church — to seek her out, give her a big hug, and say: "There, there, Mags, we love you really, honest we do." Do it today, and put the twinkle back in her eyes.

TREMENDOUS news. Mr Norman Hills calls from Somerset offering a copy of Lord Woodrow Wyatt's 1976 classic *The Exploits of Mr. Secretary*. Mr Hills edited a journal in the days when Woody had a printing business (one, alas, that went bust), and was given the book as a Christmas present by the author himself. Would you believe it, the copy is actually signed. Even now, it is travelling through the post, and will take up its tenure as Diary Book of the Month next week.

IHAVE a new so-called rival. It is my friend Ken Follett, who writes the diary in this week's *Time Out* magazine. Ken is at his most playful and self-parodic, describing the *Guardian* as a "sent newspaper", and professing enthusiasm for the Kent town of Stevenage, which his wife Barbie hopes to represent as a Labour MP. Ken is besotted with the local football club, describing Stevenage FC as "the best team in the Diadora League". As he very well knows, Stevenage FC play in the more prestigious Vauxhall Conference. But how typical of Ken to parody himself so wittily as a metropolitan sophisticate affecting knowledge of local matters.



Fine words, but the state rolls on

Commentary

Hugo Young

ON THE eve of the Conservative Party Conference, speaking to a private meeting, John Major gave notice of swingeing cuts in public spending. Headlines appeared next day saying that his final speech to the conference would set out the shape of this "draconian approach to financial virtue". Needless to say, nothing of the sort occurred. If anything, ministerial outpourings at Blackpool pleased the assembled multitude by pointing towards more spending, not less. This is, after all, staid Britain, and an election beckons.

The size of the state is the most intractable long-term issue in politics. It's at the sharp end of economic argument in countries from China to the US. It is also one of the few issues that continue seriously to divide left and right. In Britain, other large issues such as Europe and defence, which once starkly distinguished the mainstream parties, no longer do so to this

same extent. Ireland, crime, the environment, these likewise gather together many different politicians, building round simplicities on the one hand, or complexities on the other, that are immune from distinctive stands of principle.

But the state and its future remains a different kind of question. It fits the matrix of the old ideological divide. More statism to the left, less to the right: we still know where, aspirationally, Lib-Lab and Conservative are positioned.

This perception of a divide reaches into the Tory Party itself. The Governor of Hong Kong, quondam Tory, was, this week, drawn on his Asian experience to suggest that the proportion of money taken by the British state, 42 per cent of gross domestic product, is too large. He was immediately welcomed into the ranks of the right. Here is one more proof, we're told, that the Tories are uniting round a distinctively right-wing position, which foreshadow a great electoral debate with their opponents concerning the most fundamental of all modern questions.

I think what's on show here is less the vitality of Conservative thinking than the Tories' ongoing capacity to have it both ways: pretending to an adventurous new realism for the next campaign, without daring to indicate a

single thing they would do about it. Mr Patten's speech, literate and reflective, better illustrates the timidity of the Tory debate than any radicalism coursing through the party's councils. Even sheltered in Hong Kong, he makes only a gingerly approach to the smaller state. Many Tories, in their hearts, might like to see one. They worry more than Labour about the drag on market dynamism imposed by large state spending. In some circumstances they might be more persuadable that there should be drastic cuts. But that moment isn't now, and the Governor isn't yet a programmatic rightist any more than are the right themselves. There is no programme. There are merely words, anxious or defiant depending on whether Mr Patten or Mr Redwood is the speaker.

Most Tories whatever their origin are, in other words, prisoners of the cultural and political assumptions this old European country has developed over half a century. All Tory politicians want to reduce public spending below 40 per cent of GDP, but sixteen years of failure have shown how fragile is their will to insist on this being achieved. For further evidence, consult *Too Close To Call* (Little Brown £17.50), just published by two of Mr Major's advisers, Sarah Hogg and Jonathan Hill, their

retirement version of the Major years. Though it has some important factual disclosures, for example about the Maastricht negotiation, and is atmospherically revealing, this book suffers more than most such memoirs from telling only a fraction of what the authors know and saw. The reader feels somewhat patronised, by being studiously short-changed. Ms Hogg was once, after all, a journalist. Here she cannot tell the truth. But it does clearly emerge that Mr Major has no more time than any other prime minister to take a sceptical interest in the size of the state. The acceptable range of central state power, as is once more revealed by the latest leak of an outline plan to nationalise all schools, seems limitless. On budget issues, one only has to read the Hogg-Hill account of the 1991 pre-election public spending round to understand how remote from departmental ministers'

Labour is certain to have the gravest problems with public spending. Mr Blair is well aware of this

agenda, at that time, was the slightest possibility of a calculated budget cut-back. Nor is there much sign that this has changed. In the absence of a new philosophy, all departmental ministers fight for their budgets to the death. And in the absence of a chancellor who, unlike Kenneth Clarke, believes in the virtue of a smaller state, that new philosophy will not emerge. There is, I think, only one circumstance in which it is

likely to do so. This is if the Labour Party wins the election. Labour is certain to have the gravest problems with public spending. Mr Blair is well aware of this, which is why he and Mr Brown have exerted minatory pressures on their colleagues, who daily suffer the most abject public embarrassment in radio and television interviews rather than commit the party to spending a penny of extra money. But the Labour commitment doesn't get even as far as an aspiration to re-examine the quantum of public spending, or the necessity perhaps to eliminate whole areas from public responsibility.

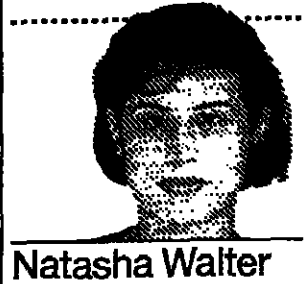
Since half the parliamentary party, and maybe half the Cabinet, will have a prejudice in favour of succumbing to the interest-group pressures that will pile upon them when the post-Tory floodgate is at last opened, it does not make sense to look to the Blair years as a period when the Patten propositions will call for a radical response.

Elizabeth Hurley has been seen around town wearing a pink ribbon. But she needn't worry as much as some women. Figures released this week show that although the incidence of breast cancer is greater among middle-class women, poor women are most likely to die of it.

Being wealthy is our best protection against an early death, and not just from breast cancer. Poverty is a highly effective killer in Britain: seven years of life are denied to people at the bottom of the heap. A government report this week confirmed that difference in life expectancy: a difference that stifles its ability to deny the nation's growing inequalities. All sorts of factors compound the disadvantage poor people face: high-risk lifestyles typified by cigarettes and lack of exercise could be seen as irresponsible, but bad housing and the difficulty of maintaining a warm environment and a good diet are just part of what being poor means in Britain today. Research done by NCH Action for Children last year suggested that a woman on income support would not have the money to give her child the equivalent of the diet laid down in Victorian workhouses. And diet is now more and more implicated in disease — from cancer to birth defects.

Even heart disease, once mythologised as the disease of the high-flier, is now discovered to be the disease of the low-flier. Bus-drivers were the occupational group who came out on top of recent research into who dies of heart disease. This is the unsexy, grotty underbelly of medical advances. We can all gasp over the bizarre pictures released this week of a human ear grafted on to a mouse's back, and wonder over the godlike status of the scientists who mixed mouse and man with surreal abandon. But how do we close the gap between the lovely laboratory, spinning dreams in its clean, brilliant universe, and the tatty estate where no one is taking folic acid before pregnancy or eating dark-green vegetables or doing load-bearing exercise three times a week? Perhaps the vanguard should stop racing so fast, and more energy be diverted into getting the people at the back to catch up. What would this shift mean in practice? Preferably not the heavier and heavier hand

The two-step that beats the giant leap



Natasha Walter

THIS is breast cancer awareness month, so Elizabeth Hurley has been seen around town wearing a pink ribbon. But she needn't worry as much as some women. Figures released this week show that although the incidence of breast cancer is greater among middle-class women, poor women are most likely to die of it.

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of the nanny state. The most vital steps enter that thorny tangle of conveying health messages to communities in ways that enable rather than just teach.

What price the advice to take more exercise on a stretched budget? But some GPs have been giving their depressed, overweight, unfit patients vouchers for the local gym. How clever are advertisements pushing smoke alarms if people cannot afford them? But one community health project in Scotland launched a loan scheme for home-safety equipment and saw the rate of child accidents fall at the local hospital. How useful are state-run campaigns to eat more healthily, when the messages compete with advertising for high-fat, high-sugar foods? But co-operative movements like the Sandwell Food Co-operatives Development Unit in the West Midlands bring cheap fresh food into areas where there is no access to good shops. It reports that some elderly people reached by the scheme tasted grapes for the first time. The gap between that kind of day-to-day deprivation and the Frankensteinian glamour of the grafted ear is a gulf into which many medical dreams fall flat.

PERHAPS it was the realisation of the excessive distance between potential and reality that led the National Lottery Charities Board to sideline medical research charities in its first rounds of grant-giving. The few health projects that the lottery has funded are deliberately targeting the gap between the laboratory and the real world. As far as breast cancer goes, the board has given £201,600 to a Cancer Research Campaign project in Glasgow, investigating the links between breast cancer mortality and poverty. Its work is not nearly as dramatic as that of those who research the "magic bullets" that might "win the battle" against the disease. Dr Una McIsaac, who set up the project, is looking at interconnected factors, from the delivery of medical care to diet, smoking and the prevalence of other diseases, with a practical emphasis: "It's what one can actually change that interests us."

Other projects boosted by the lottery board include a women's health advice centre in Ashington, Northumberland, which emphasises self-help. Age Concern projects providing help with heating, and community centres giving out nutrition advice. These low-key little projects run close to the bumpy ground of everyday life and are the real heroes of our dreams for longer lives. The mouse with a human ear might look like a giant leap for humankind — but the two-step-forward, one-step-back dance of community-based projects up and down Britain may get us further, faster.

Britain pretends Nigeria is 'safe' enough to bar its refugees — yet, argues Nobel-prizewinning writer **Wole Soyinka**, the Government promotes its very instability

Safe haven of duplicity



IHAVE recently had the unsavory experience of reading an official commissioned document on the question of asylum-seekers in Britain. It purported to offer a "safety profile" of the nations from which such refugees have fled, and a more meretricious document I have yet to meet in my modest encounters with the paper trails of official deception.

The history of fascism and its apologists, alas, is replete with the kind of archival material evidently prepared by experts who have been carefully assembled for the sole purpose of justifying policies that are already decided upon.

The *Guardian's* revelations that the British government is preparing to act on this document come as no surprise. The miracle indeed is that John Major's administration has not gone even further. I fully expect to learn any day now that it has resumed the sale of arms to General Sani Abacha's regime in order to enable Nigeria to secure her borders against the hordes of migrants attempting to crash into a land that is so prodigiously overflowing with liberty, justice, free speech, individual security, not to mention the proverbial milk and honey.

Only the British government appears not to know that, within Nigeria, mere association, something as innocuous as kinship alone, with dissident journalists, alleged coup-plotters, political opponents of all kinds, etc etc, has turned the lives of millions of Nigerians into a nightmare of existence. Hostage-taking and extra-judicial executions have become the stock-in-trade of Abacha's desperate hold on power. Or could it be that the British government believes that the recent travesty of justice in the secret trials of many prominent Nigerian citizens is some kind of fleeting aberration?

The truth is this: Britain is merely laying the groundwork for a policy of accommodation with Abacha's and other African dictatorships. The issue, in my view, is not whether or not the United Kingdom stands to benefit — culturally, economically, or whatever — from an influx of asylum-seekers. What is presently covered up by the issue of asylum policy is Britain's now familiar collaboratorist attitude towards the most repellent regimes on the continent of Africa — as long as business continues as usual.

The Commonwealth Summit is just around the corner. I find it no mere coincidence that there has been in the past few weeks an acceleration of moves to implement the new asylum proposals. The real objective is a clean bill of health for the likes of Abacha and a return of favours — all in the line of business — at the next Commonwealth Conference. I do not believe for a moment Abacha's recent protestations that he has no intention of attending that meeting; all the evidence points to the wish of the British government to indulge it

self and delude the world with the discredited line of "constructive engagement". There is a point at which the duplicity of governments becomes so shaming that moral considerations do no more than rebuke their proponents. It is futile therefore to request of John Major's government a sense of moral responsibility towards those who face a real danger to their very existence if they are returned to the grip of their own governments. Let us propose instead to the British government a simple aspect of self-interest that it

may have overlooked. Clearly, the narrow nationalism that has become a recent tendency in much of Europe has not left Britain untouched. On the contrary, the Government's policies indicate that the legacy of Enoch Powell is not dead, and that Jean-Marie Le Pen would find easy adherents in this country, should European unification finally move beyond rhetoric. There is, however, one way to remove, or drastically reduce, the emotive targets on which such chauvinism feeds. This is to cut off, at source,

the causes of the exodus that constitutes the agony of the nationalist extreme. It is all a question of choice: Britain cannot support repressive regimes abroad and expect that her borders will not be invaded by refugees. If Nigerian asylum-seekers did not constitute an issue two or three years ago, there is a definite reason why they have suddenly become one, and Britain is uniquely positioned to supply the answer to that question: why? In short, at least as far as one refugee source — Nigeria — is concerned, Britain can

A writer sentenced to permanent exile

WOLE SOYINKA was born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, in 1934. He has been a lecturer, a playwright and, notably, a political prisoner in his home country. His outspoken views have often led him into conflict with Nigeria's rulers: in 1965 he famously held up a radio station at gunpoint and forced it to replace a prime-ministerial broadcast with his own recorded warning to the premier to leave town.

After imprisonment on political grounds from 1967 to 1969, he went into voluntary exile. He returned to Nigeria in 1975 but left again eight years later when tipped that his life was at risk. Two years ago, General Sani Abacha seized power after the then president, General Ibrahim Babangida, cancelled elections. Moshood Abiola, considered to be president-elect, was arrested and charged with treason. Political activity was banned and 40 alleged coup plotters were convicted and sentenced to death by imprisonment. There has been strong international criticism of Abacha's regime.

Thirteen months ago, as Soyinka was about to board a flight to Germany and Sweden for a lecture tour, police confiscated his passport. After learning that he was soon to be arrested, he smuggled himself out of Nigeria, having first found a safe place for his wife and children.

Since then he has been living nomadically in exile, from Paris and London to Zurich and Boston. Wole Soyinka won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. His play, *Beatification of Arinze Boy*, previews from today at the West Yorkshire Playhouse

COULD YOU BE A MORE INSPIRING LEADER?

Does your team ever wonder why it fails to achieve its goals? Are you a manager who is not a leader? Do you lack the confidence to lead your team? Do you lack the skills to lead your team? Do you lack the motivation to lead your team? Do you lack the vision to lead your team? Do you lack the courage to lead your team? Do you lack the ability to lead your team? Do you lack the power to lead your team? Do you lack the influence to lead your team? Do you lack the respect to lead your team? Do you lack the authority to lead your team? Do you lack the credibility to lead your team? Do you lack the integrity to lead your team? Do you lack the honesty to lead your team? Do you lack the transparency to lead your team? Do you lack the accountability to lead your team? Do you lack the responsibility to lead your team? Do you lack the leadership to lead your team? Do you lack the inspiration to lead your team? Do you lack the motivation to lead your team? 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Grid set float in

Royal Bank
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his time to set
a new insurance
company, writes
Patrick Donovan

Union staff's anger over pay cuts, page 12

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Privatisation fears lie behind French rail strike

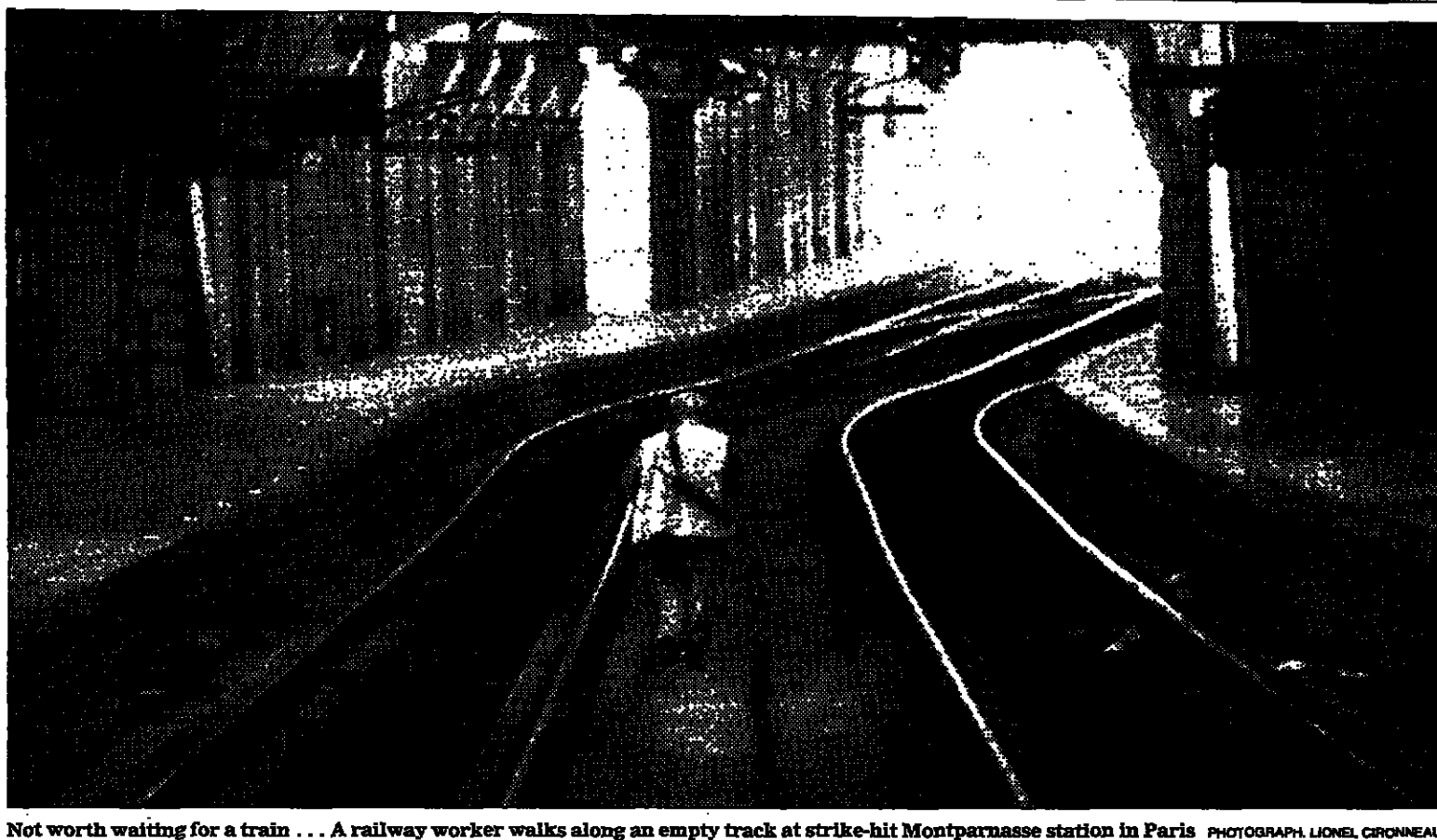
RAIL unions caused chaos throughout France yesterday in a strike over government plans to close nearly a fifth of the national network, writes Paul Webster in Paris.

A drastic plan to reduce state subsidies of more than 26 billion a year will be announced next month, but the unions say the proposals will hit hundreds of provincial towns and villages. And they believe privatisation of the railways could follow.

The contract between the state and the Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français — SNCF — is being renegotiated because of falling passenger and freight returns, which have been disguised by the success of profitable super-speed TGV trains. Overall, SNCF has lost half its passenger traffic since 1980.

"The state railways just cannot compete with road hauliers," an SNCF spokesman said.

"As for passengers, we could introduce bus services in rural areas that would cost by 80 per cent."



Not worth waiting for a train... A railway worker walks along an empty track at strike-hit Montparnasse station in Paris. PHOTOGRAPH: LIONEL CROCHON

Sale of electricity network operator designed to bring much-needed revenue for the Government

Grid set for £3bn float in December

Chris Barrie

GOVERNMENT plans to raise sorely-needed revenue ahead of next month's Budget took shape yesterday when the National Grid confirmed it is to be floated in December and the nuclear industry insisted it was on course for privatisation next summer.

As details of the Grid sale — likely to be valued at £3 billion, came to light — nuclear industry executives said talks were under way aimed at resolving the vexed issue of £4 billion of debts before the planned sell-off.

The Grid, operator of the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, is to be floated by its owners, the regional electricity companies, which will receive close to £1 billion at first in special dividends.

This cash will be used by the RECs to fund the winding up of them by the Government to pay a 50p discount on electricity bills as a sweetener for disgruntled consumers — and to meet tax liabilities arising from the sale.

The company, renamed the National Grid Group, is promising its shareholders total dividends of £175 million for the year to next March, rising

to £180 million the following year. The company declined to comment on City forecasts that its gearing would rise above 100 per cent because of its hefty payments to the RECs before the flotation.

Under the terms of the capital structure of the Grid outlined yesterday, it will issue 1,244 billion new shares to shareholders, principally the RECs. This includes shares to be issued in the pumped storage business slated for sale by the year-end. The Government will retain a golden share.

Some RECs have indicated that they will pass the Grid shares on to their own shareholders. However, just 45 per cent of the shares will be in the hands of the public when dealings start because the other RECs have yet to decide whether to follow suit immediately or to hold the Grid shares pending the outcome of takeover battles.

Under the terms of the float, all RECs must cut their holdings in the Grid to 1 per cent within a year. The Grid's finance director, John Utley, admitted that this would leave a huge stock "overhang", but said the Government was examining ways of ensuring an orderly market was maintained once dealing had started.

Meanwhile, the shadow

chancellor, Gordon Brown, called for the sale to be postponed until a fair deal could be worked out for consumers and taxpayers.

"The Government seems to be letting the RECs and Grid directors off lightly as they are set to make even bigger gains from the sell-off," said Mr Brown.

Staff in his office repeated claims that the taxpayer would make nothing from the flotation because of its structure. One adviser also pointed out that beneficiaries would include predatory bidders. Eastern Group, bought by the conglomerate Hanson for £2.5 billion, will receive £118 million from pay-outs from the Grid before the float and stands to make another £430 million from the flotation itself, he said.

Dr Robert Hawley, chief executive of Nuclear Electric, told MPs that negotiations had begun with the Government on the amount of liabilities that would be transferred into the private sector when the industry is privatised next year.

Stressing that privatisation was on track, Dr Hawley indicated that the "upper whack" for the liabilities would be about £4 billion, representing the costs of disposing of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors (AGRs).

Chris Barrie

THE wave of takeovers in the electricity industry has forced companies to cut investment so much that the long-term reliability of the nation's transmission system could be threatened, equipment manufacturers said yesterday.

As the industry watchdog, Professor Stephen Littlechild, ordered regional electricity companies (RECs) to disclose their investment plans in greater detail, electrical equipment makers warned that the RECs were deferring investment plans in order to husband cash for war chests to fight off unwanted takeovers.

Alan Bullen, director of Beama's Transmission and Distribution Association — the trade organisation representing electrical equipment makers and the transformer industry — said RECs were under pressure from the "feeding frenzy" of takeovers, regulatory uncertainty and the risk of political interference in the form of unexpected referrals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

He said: "The fears of this is

not conducive to the long-term reliability of the system. The present flurry of takeover activity will continue to have an unsettling effect on RECs' expenditure plans."

Before privatisation the electricity industry spent heavily on equipment, which now needs to be replaced. But wherever possible utilities are now extending the life of electrical equipment instead of replacing it.

The concerns were voiced as Professor Littlechild demanded that RECs report in detail each year on their investments. He wanted RECs to report on the quantity and duration of power cuts, to identify which parts of the network were most vulnerable, to pinpoint which customers were worst served and to comment on how improvements would be made.

Welcoming Professor Littlechild's tougher stance, Yvonne Constance, chairman of the consumer committees set up to monitor the RECs, said the quality of supply in some parts of the country left "much to be desired". She said customers had already paid for investment through the allowances made when the price caps were set.

£500m wiped off British Gas shares after warning by regulator

NEARLY £500 million was wiped off the stock market value of British Gas yesterday after Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, said that the group's survival was threatened by its long term contracts with North Sea gas producers, writes Nicholas Bannister.

Under the contracts, British Gas is obliged to pay for fixed amounts of gas, regardless of whether it takes delivery. It entered into the contracts when it was a state-owned monopoly with an obligation to secure supplies for the future.

The gradual introduction of competition, coupled with events such as the delayed commissioning of three big gas-fired power stations and the mild winter, have left the group committed to buy far more gas than it needs.

British Gas said yesterday it had drawn shareholders' attention to the problem in September when it warned it would have to make a provision of up to £100 million this year after paying for £500 million of gas it could not sell. It was also seeking to renegotiate the contracts.

Analysts suggested that Ms Spottiswoode's intervention was aimed at adding urgency to those negotiations. About 50 companies in a variety of consortia are involved.

Royal Bank gives Wood a US fillip

Direct Line chief wins time to set up new insurance company, writes Patrick Donovan

PETER WOOD, the vastly wealthy head of the Royal Bank of Scotland's Direct Line insurance company, is to be allowed to spend up to half his working hours setting up his own business in the United States, with no cut in his £350,000-a-year director's salary.

Royal Bank is so anxious to retain his services as Direct Line's chief executive that it has agreed to change his fixed-term contract, which obliged him to spend at least four days a week working for the bank. He has been retained another two years.

Mr Wood has negotiated what is in effect a hefty pay rise after telling the bank that he is looking to start a Direct Line-type operation in the US. It gives him the opportunity to build on his estimated £20 million fortune from telephone insurance in the United Kingdom.

He insisted yesterday that he was "committed to Direct Line and Royal Bank Group, where I am a director and substantial shareholder". But he added: "Tackling the US market is a major opportunity and I am delighted that Royal Bank Group shares my

enthusiasm for this project."

The Royal Bank of Scotland, which bought out Mr Wood's commission agreement, is planning to launch a new Direct Line insurance business for £24 million two years ago, is prevented from expanding in the US. Strict regulations preventing banks from running insurance operations would allow Royal Bank to take no more than a 5 per cent stake in Mr Wood's proposed venture.

But the group chief executive, George Mathewson, said that it would receive royalties if Mr Wood's venture used Direct Line's trademark red telephone and jingle.

In a statement, the bank said: "Mr Wood, who is currently in preliminary discussions on the proposed US joint venture, will be permitted to invest, together with a number of other associates, in a new US company which will engage in the direct selling of motor and household insurance in the US, Canada and Mexico."

Mr Mathewson added: "In the UK the enormous success of Direct Line is well known. Peter will continue at the helm of Direct Line and build on that success together with his strong and highly motivated management team."

He said Mr Wood's plans "give us the opportunity to participate in the US market to the extent currently possible in a way which will bring us further benefits from Peter Wood's proven track record in the industry".

Pollution regime made public

Roger Cowe

THE Department of the Environment has been forced to reveal the membership of committees which determine pollution limits for industry processes — and are packed with industry representatives.

The climbdown, under pressure from the Ombudsman, comes as fears are growing that industry pressure is resulting in lax pollution standards for the UK, higher emissions than elsewhere in Europe and damage to the emerging pollution technology industry.

Bill Morris, general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, which had pressed for details of more than 80 sector working parties to be made public, described the disclosure as "a blow for open government".

The working parties are responsible for preparing and updating guidance notes on permitted discharge levels under the government's Integrated Pollution Control regime.

The DoE now accepts that access to government information it should not have refused the union's original request, in October 1994. A spokesman said yesterday that this had been "a minor

procedural error". He insisted there was nothing sinister in the membership of what he said were technical advisory groups, whose draft guidance for pollution inspectors had been published for comment by interested parties.

But Mr Morris said the union had exposed "a group of shadowy people working behind closed doors, with a closed agenda and closed minds". The DoE was letting industry set its own pollution standards, with the result that permitted emission levels were too high.

This week the Environmental Industries Commission, a trade body for pollution control companies, wrote to the DoE complaining about three pollution guidance notes.

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Notebook

Guilty secrets over gilts



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE Bank of England has received an instant morale boost with the oversubscription in its auction of £3 billion of 20-year UK government bonds. But before anyone gets too carried away with the result, which sparked a rally in both gilts and the pound, they should consider some of the circumstances carefully.

This time around, the gilts on offer were 20-year term rather than 10 years — which meant they had a much more natural market among UK investing institutions. Life insurance and pension fund managers prefer 20-year bonds because they are more easily matched to their liabilities. Moreover, the authorities exercise a little more influence in this particular segment of the market, because British institutions are keener than the more fickle international investors.

Clearly, the UK cannot look that unattractive for global investors at present. By a process of elimination it is easy to rule out France and Italy, because of the uncertain political and budgetary back-

grounds. Japan bonds offer little return and, with the threat of intervention to strengthen the dollar, may not provide much currency gain either. US bonds, generally more of a bellweather for the UK market, remain slightly under a cloud, despite an advance yesterday, because of the row between the White House and Congress over the balanced budget, the debt ceiling and the remote prospect of a debt default.

That leaves many investors with a choice between gilts and German bonds. Gilts offer the higher return — but with the prospect of currency loss under normal circumstances. However, the recent turbulence in the exchange rate mechanism has brought the pound down close to its April lows, against the German mark, so the currency risk in sterling looks fairly minimal.

The fundamental question overhanging British government funding is political rather than economic. The correction in the public finances, anticipated this year, has come through more slowly. The latest consensus forecast from the private sector is for the public sector borrowing requirement to come in at around £27.7 billion in 1995/96 against the £23.5 billion in the government's summer forecast. In the view of some outside

analysts, including the executive board of the IMF which debated the UK economy this week, this leaves very little room for tax cuts. However, there have to be tax cuts and the Government has boxed itself into a corner in which they have to be paid for by trimming public spending.

Tycoon arranged vital talks with bank for day after death

Maxwell trial

Dan Atkinson

ROBERT MAXWELL had been due to hold a crucial meeting with the chief executive of Lloyds Bank, Sir Brian Pitman, the day after his mysterious death at sea, an Old Bailey court was told yesterday. The publisher intended to ask Sir Brian to support a rescue plan for his debt-laden private business empire.

"It was a very important meeting for us," the late businessman's son Kevin told jurors. His father "wished to seek Lloyds Bank support for a substantial refinancing of the private interests".

Kevin said that to deal with the private companies' liquidity problems, his father wanted to "put some concrete" into the floor of bank support, thus allowing the private side to sell assets for good prices.

Elsewhere in his evidence, Kevin agreed with an internal Lloyds Bank assessment of his father as unpredictable and inconsistent, and he told jurors his father had enjoyed shareholders' meetings. "He was a showman."

Kevin Maxwell, aged 36, denies two charges of conspiring to defraud pension funds. His brother Ian, aged 39, and financial adviser Larry Trachtenberg, 42, deny one similar charge.

The court was told that the lunch with Sir Brian had been planned for November 5, the day after the tycoon's death. Lloyds Bank's support was needed for a restructuring of Maxwell empire from a number of institutions.

The case continues today.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLERS

Australia 2.05	France 7.45	Italy 2.58	Singapore 2.18
Austria 14.55	Germany 2.90	Japan 0.54	South Africa 3.57
Belgium 45.70	Greece 35.00	Netherlands 2.80	Spain 16.91
Canada 2.1075	Hong Kong 12.01	New Zealand 2.350	Sweden 10.30
Cyprus 0.89	India 9.50	Norway 9.50	Switzerland 1.73
Denmark 6.59	Israel 0.58	Portugal 22.00	Turkey 75.00
	Malta 0.54	Saudi Arabia 5.39	USA 1.5420

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel)

Staff accuse union over wage cuts

Richard Thomas

THE insurance arm of Unison, the trade union spearheading campaigns for a minimum wage and against boardroom greed, is planning to cut the wages of clerical staff and boost management pay packets.

The board at Unia (Insurance) Limited, which provides insurance products to 100,000 Unison members, has drawn up confidential plans to take over all staff contracts from central union administration, and replace the existing pay scales with a less equal wage structure.

Junior clerical staff wage levels are to drop from £12,587 a year to £8,818 per annum, while managing director Eddie Dove's salary will jump by £7,000 to £43,000. Other senior staff will receive similar increases if the proposals are implemented.

The reforms have provoked an angry backlash among staff, who have sent a paper seen by the Guardian — to Unia executives, accusing the union of hypocrisy, given its high-profile campaigns against similar moves in public services sold off to the private sector.

"This move so closely mirrors the actions of privatised utilities that it is tantamount to moral bankruptcy," the paper says. "Why should any employer listen to a trade union that does not practice what it preaches?"

The document warns that switching control over salaries could presage a danger of Unia and Unison, a claim strenuously denied by the company. The Unia board will respond to the criticisms after a meeting tomorrow.

Mr Dove confirmed that, as part of a relocation to Steven-

age, salary scales were under review. Although staff members' conditions would not change, he also admitted that only a quarter of the firm's 75-strong workforce have agreed to move to the new site.

In order to attract the right calibre of staff, he thought it necessary to rethink our pay structure," he explained. He said pay at the bottom of the scale would fall, because of a "discrepancy" between wages for insurance clerical staff in Stevenage and existing Unia levels of pay.

Unison officials sought to distance the union from the row. Although the Unia board is composed entirely of current and former Unison executive members, Unison assistant general secretary Allan Taylor said: "Legally, the insurance arm is entirely separate — although in practice the links are close. (Unison general secretary) Alan Johnson is secretary to the Unia board." He said Unison was watching the changes closely, but was satisfied that the position of existing workers was being protected.

Shop stewards at Unia argue that Unison is guilty of double standards in allowing the insurance branch to apply local pay scales while opposing such moves in public services, such as the National Health Service.

Mr Dove said he understood staff fears but insisted the changes were necessary to give 100,000 policyholders an efficient service. As most of the company's workforce had opted to take a generous severance package, the majority of staff would be employed under new conditions.

He said the unease felt by employees partly reflected a "difference of culture" between traditional trade union conditions and the competitive insurance market.

Screw tightens on news outlets

Outlook/ The big supermarkets are demanding a better deal, says Lisa Buckingham

IF GOD had meant business inefficiency to exist he would not have invented supermarkets. That, at least, must be how it seems to the increasing slice of British industry.

The combination of enormous market muscle and probably the most effective retail skills in the country has allowed the supermarkets to cut a swath through sectors as diverse as booze, books and bananas — either forcing suppliers to cut their charges or demanding a sea-change in the quality and terms of supply.

The latest victim is newspaper and magazine distribution, which over the past few months has been attempting to escape wider attention by staging its own efficiency drive.

Although supermarkets have sold newspapers and magazines for only about five years, they already control about 12 per cent of the total market and, as in other sectors, clearly feel they should have a lot more.

Wholesalers have come under dual pressure. Publishers are trying to save on costs because of rising newspaper prices and the newspaper price war. They also have to meet the demands of supplying a much larger number of retail outlets. As a result, the wholesalers have finally realised that what is essentially a 100-year-old distribution system must change.

Belatedly the wholesale giants, WH Smith and Menzies, have been caving up the country by closing down their smallest and least efficient depots and ceding territory to each other — all in the nicest possible way, of course, and all with the blessing of the monopolies authorities.

But for supermarket groups, entangled in a vicious fight for market share and profits expansion, the process is moving far too slowly. They have the confidence of having recently overturned the book world's price-fixing Net Book Agreement, which had forced a distribution shake-up in the giant drinks industry, they are in the process of challenging the petrol goliaths and have brought many independent fruit and vegetable producers to heel in one-to-one supply deals.

They are also mounting a challenge to minimum drug prices, although the manufacturers and the National Pharmaceutical Association are threatening a fierce rear-guard action.

For supermarket executives, to whom electronic ordering, stocking and point-of-sale are second nature, the magazine wholesalers' promise that at some distant point "new technology" could help to improve things is infuriating.

But the wholesalers, who provide a merchandising service to most of their customers, claim that the supermarkets are not impregnable.



Read all about it... but can newsagents fight against supermarkets? PHOTOGRAPHED BY MCHP

Tesco and others may mean that they cannot obtain sufficient copies of a certain magazine, the sales of newspapers and magazines would increase. The fear of wastage would disappear and print runs could be better planned.

The supermarkets are now attempting to start serious negotiations with the wholesalers, but are leaving them in no doubt that failure will mean the likes of Tesco attempting to go straight to the publishers to secure deals.

For those whose business is not forced to close and whose job is not obliterated, that will be fine, so long as the sales of a particular title

do increase. But publishers will want to maintain their revenue levels, and some are already worried that the supermarkets might try to pressurise margins. If the supermarkets simply force better trade terms out of the publishers than they currently get from the wholesalers, revenues will have to be made up somewhere.

Like others before them, independent newsagents could find their trade terms put at peril to compensate for a squeeze by supermarkets. The success of that squeeze will finance the very discounts which could threaten their future.

Tesco argues, however, that by introducing modern retailing and distribution systems such as electronic ordering and electronic point

of sale, as well as up-to-the-minute promotional tools such as in-store-linked savings, the sales of newspapers and magazines would increase. The fear of wastage would disappear and print runs could be better planned.

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For those whose business is not forced to close and whose job is not obliterated, that will be fine, so long as the sales of a particular title

News in brief

Long hours threat to UK productivity

LONG working hours have become an industrial epidemic in Britain and threaten to have a devastating impact on productivity and the country's international competitiveness, according to research published today by leading recruitment advertising company, Austin Knight, in collaboration with the charity Parents At Work.

The research shows that 81 per cent of men work more than 40 hours a week, while more than a third (37 per cent) work in excess of 50 hours — undermining employees' health, lowering morale and damaging family life. Even women with children are caught up in the trend with 48 per cent working a 40-hours plus week. — *Celia Weston*

Gilt auction succeeds

THE Government breathed a sigh of relief yesterday after a successful £3 billion debt sale eclipsed memories of last month's auction flop and sent the gilt market soaring. Dealers described it as a "textbook" sale of debt due for repayment in 2015 — with double the demand required to raise the cash.

There had been fears that the undersubscribing of last month's auction — also valued at £3 billion — revealed a new reluctance to invest in UK government stock, given the worse-than-expected position of the public finances. — *Richard Thomas*

MP seeks Lloyd's re-election

PETER VIGGERS, Conservative MP for Gosport, is planning to stand for re-election to the ruling Council of the troubled Lloyd's of London insurance market because he fears that other investors, or Names, who are hostile to the proposed £3 billion market settlement could gain too much power.

His plans emerged as the Court of Appeal upheld a ruling on a reinsurance dispute, regarded as significant for the way in which Lloyd's syndicates should be reserved under the settlement. The Court decided that reinsureds may collect their own reinsurance before paying out money to claimants. — *Lisa Buckingham*

Drugs group sales rise 16pc

DRUG group SmithKline Beecham yesterday reported third quarter sales of £1.7 billion, a 16 per cent increase on last year. Profit before tax for the three months was 9 per cent higher at £310 million. Results were boosted by last year's acquisition of Sterling, the maker of non-prescription medicines such as Milk of Magnesia.

Pharmaceuticals remain the group's largest activity, with sales in the quarter up by a tenth to £878 million. Falling sales of the off-patent ulcer product Tagamet were offset by new products, which collectively grew by more than a quarter. — *Roger Cowie*

Smiths' record profits

SMITHS Industries, the aerospace and medical products group, yesterday said growth from both existing businesses and new acquisitions had helped it produce record full year pre-tax profits of £138 million.

Smiths, which is gradually refocusing its businesses from aerospace to medical technology, said almost half of the profits came from overseas activities. News of the figures delighted the City, sending the shares up 15p, to 580p. — *Ian King*

Foolproof camera on way

THE 35mm film format which has dominated amateur photography for the past 20 years is to be challenged by a new format developed by the world's leading photographic companies for a new foolproof camera which goes on sale next year. Kodak said it had invested about \$300 million (£193 million) in the system.

It said the system should end the loading problems which result in 15 per cent of all films sent to developers being blank, fogged or double-exposed. The US company, which has worked with Canon, Minolta, Nikon and Fuji, said the film cassette is smaller than the traditional 35mm because of the increased public demand for small cameras. — *Nicholas Barnister*

Administrator meets Nadir

POLLY PECK administrator Christopher Barlow yesterday disclosed that he met the group's founder Asil Nadir for four and a half hours in Turkish Cyprus earlier this month. But he denied any deal had been done with the fugitive tycoon with regard to Mr Nadir buying back any Polly assets.

This was the first time an administrator had met Polly's former chairman since Mr Nadir fled to northern Cyprus in spring 1993, claiming a planned British criminal trial on Polly-related charges would not be fair. — *Dan Atkinson*

Scots cable channel unveiled

SCOTTISH Television yesterday revealed the first fruits of its strategic alliance with satellite and cable group Flextech unveiling a new cable channel, to be called the Scottish Channel. Programmes, which will be made in Scotland and involve local organisations, are to be backed by Scottish public bodies, advertisers and voluntary groups. — *Ian King*

More families lose homes

Margaret Hughes
Personal Finance Editor

GLOOM deepened yesterday in the housing market as figures from the Lord Chancel's office showed a rise of almost 13 per cent in the number of mortgage possession orders applied for by lenders in the third quarter of this year. The number of orders granted by the county courts also increased.

Lenders applied to the courts for a total of 22,091 possession orders over the three month period to the end of September. This was a quarterly increase of more than 3,500 — the biggest in two years, which reverses the downward trend of the previous quarter. The number of orders granted was slightly up, at 19,048, reversing the downward trend of the past three quarters.

The rise in applications for court possession orders continues the upward trend first reported this summer by the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML). It announced that repossessions by lenders in

the first half of this year showed the first increase in almost four years. This has renewed fears in the housing market that cuts in the income support safety net for unemployed borrowers, which started to bite on October 1, will lead to a surge in repossessions.

Shelter, the housing charity, said yesterday it feared the changes in mortgage income support would "dump more people into the crisis of repossession". Shelter, along with others in the housing market, including the CML, have been urging the Chancellor to introduce Budget measures to revive the moribund housing market. So far the calls appear to be failing.

So is the winding-up a dodge to avoid the freeholder? Alas, no. In its Dean Street days, the BFI was a company limited by guarantee. In 1983, it gained a Royal charter. The old company has to be asked before the landlord can run the new one. Negotiations with said landlord are underway. The Department of National Heritage, the BFI's parent ministry, is taking part. The sum involved has not been disclosed, but with the Treas-

can be expected. The truth is a little more complicated, to say the least.

The BFI is being pursued by the landlord of 62 Dean Street, Soho — the institute's HQ until the mid-1970s — not for its own arrears but for those of a subsequent tenant. Under the quaint law of privity of contract, the BFI, as the original leaseholder, is responsible for any defaults by later tenants.

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FOR fans of vibrating pokers, there is only one place to be next month: the National Exhibition Centre at Birmingham, venue from November 21 to 23 of the World of Concrete exhibition.

"Europe's specialist event for everyone who works with concrete". Displays will include those on the aforementioned pokers, as well as "hoppers and bins" and "crushers and crushers". In a nod to fashion from this stolid event there is to be a seminar on "Concrete in Cyberspace".

ANOTHER worthy cause for the charity assessors at the National Lottery: the Chartered Institute of Taxation has just launched the Tax Advisers' Benevolent Fund,

a charity set up for "the relief of necessities persons" who are or were tax accountants. No come cuts, please; do tax accountants not bleed?

TODAY'S think-tanks may seem strange, but those of yesteryear could be just as potty. Herman Kahn's Hudson Institute — the great granddaddy of thought-tanking — arrived in Britain in the 1970s to meet the press and opinion-formers. One Hudsonian was Ed Stillman, who, reputedly, carried a pair of binoculars wherever he went, his belief being that a community's vitality could be judged by the number of cranes on the horizon. Scanning the skyline from the balcony of his hotel in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Stillman gave his verdict: "This town is dead."

RADIO Three's sister-station, Live TV, is renowned at Canary Wharf for throwing Friday night knees-ups that are simultaneously broadcast to its viewers. Invited include Live's neighbours in the One Canada Square skyscraper. Among the latest tenants to be summoned to the aid of the party are the solid citizens of the Personal Investment Authority, the feared assurance and broking regulator. Crooked advisers should keep an eye on the box; if PIA enforcers are rocking the night away on screen, then the coast is clear to rook a few clients.

The Underside

Dan Atkinson

POOOR old Norman Lamont. First he loses his job, then he loses his seat to the Boundary Commissioners, and now he seems to be losing his memory as well. The former Chancellor has just released a slim tome — "Seven Years in the White House" (Duckworth, £8.95) — in which he alleges that, although a simple currency would be a disaster for Britain (true), critics of our ERM membership have been guilty of wild exaggeration.

"The recession ended nearly six months before we left the ERM, in the second quarter of 1992, and by the time that I accurately reported the green shoots of recovery in November 1992, recovery was well under way".

No, no, Norman. November 1992 was the non-trip to Threshers. The "Seven Years" fiasco was actually in October 1991, when the economy was still going backwards. But what's 13 months between friends? Don't ever change.

THOSE cine-lovers browsing the High Court announcements will have been outraged by news on Tuesday that the British Film Institute has been wound up. Much huffing and puffing of the will-they-shut-their-eyes variety stop-at-nothing? variety



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Boxing

Scans put fighters' safety first

John Duncan

BOXING laid its most recent victim James Murray to rest yesterday with the publication of the report of an independent medical panel, 18 months in the making, that the authorities hope will make the sport as safe as it can ever be. But the main recommendation, compulsory annual MRI brain scans for all the 800 licensed boxers, may mean instant retirement for some of them.

He rejected claims that the

MRI scan, a more sophisticated detector of brain damage than the current CT (computerised tomography) scan, would uncover large numbers of damaged boxers. A 1990 study in the United States by Dr Barry Jordan found three out of 21 MRI scans showing abnormalities that did not show up on CT. In the unlikely event of that discrepancy being repeated in Britain, the BBSC could find itself banning 114 fighters.

The Jordan study was

done on boxers with varied

careers, some with very many

contests, said Dr Whitson.

"We, by instituting MRI

scans, are going to be elimin-

ating those. Those that Jordan

looked at still continue to

box, but we're not going to

allow this. Any abnormality

will lead to those boxers

being excluded immediately."

The promoter Frank War-

ren, who is funding the first year of MRI scans to the tune of £400,000, said yesterday that the scans would hit a high number of boxers. "The scan is not cosmetic," he said. "It will affect a lot of boxers because it will measure if there is any brain damage."

The other main recommend-

ation is random weigh-ins to

ensure boxers are fighting at

their correct weight and

therefore are not forced to de-

hydrate to make the weight

just before a fight.

As well as the 12-point

safety package announced

yesterday (see right), the

panel considered recommend-

ing a reduction in the number

of rounds from the current in-

ternational standard of 12. Dr

Peter Richards, the chairman

of the panel and a leading

neurosurgeon, who operated

on Young Ali and Steve Watt,

who died from ring injuries,

said: "What we couldn't do

was put a figure on the rounds that were safe, because it would be zero. So whether nine, eight or seven rounds is optimum we cannot say."

"We're vehement though

that if there is going to be a

reduction then it has to be

worldwide. If we reduce it

here to eight and a British

boxer fights abroad over 12

he's in more danger."

John Morris, the secretary

of the BBSC, pre-empted sug-

gestions from the anti-boxing

lobby that the measures could

prevent deaths in the

ring. "There will be criticism

from people who will say we

haven't gone far enough," he

said, "but they have got

blinkers on, they haven't con-

sidered the rights of the indi-

vidual and they are out of

step."

"Most people realise that in

all risk sports there will be

from time to time some major

injuries. That we cannot

avoid, but what we have to do is make it as rare as is possible. It is the right of the individual to do what he wants to do."

Dr Richards said that al-

though boxing injuries upset

him, he did not want the sport

banned. "If you're a neuro-

surgeon you're at the sharp

end of nasty things happen,"

he said. "I have treated

far more people who've fallen

off bicycles and died than box-

ers. I have operated on more

people who've been minding

their own business on the

streets and have been hit on

the head with a bottle than

boxers."

"It's part of life, and my

view is that if people wish to

box and society wishes to

watch boxing, then as doctors

it is our duty to inform them

of the risks and do what we

can to minimise them and if

something does go wrong to

do our best to treat them."

THE 12-POINT PACKAGE

- Weigh-in times brought forward at least 24 hours.
- Compulsory annual brain scans.
- Scans to be MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) instead of CT (computerised tomography). Special panel of experts with expertise in clinical neurosciences to examine results.
- Funding sought for research into psychometric testing.
- Random drug-testing stepped up.
- Post-contest medical checks tightened.
- Suspension period for boxers knocked out or stopped extended from 28 to 45 days. No boxer stopped or knocked out to spar for 28 days.
- Any boxer knocked unconscious or taken excessive punishment to go to hospital. Board to have power to suspend any boxer ignoring medical advice either at the venue or at hospital.
- Existing ringside medical requirements approved but special medical panel chosen to assess further ringside resuscitation equipment.
- Referee permitted to consult a ringside doctor who, between rounds, can alert referee to problems.
- Ringside doctors and paramedics to be clearly identifiable and with easy access to boxers.
- Doctors to enter the ring immediately at the end to check both boxers. Ring access restricted to official personnel.

Richard Sandomir

THE key witness in the fraud case against Don King testified on Tuesday that the promoter directed him to create \$350,000 (\$225,000) in training expenses to justify an insurance claim for a Julio Cesar Chavez v Harold Brazier fight that was cancelled.

Chavez owed King, his longtime promoter, \$36,000, and King alleged that he wanted to recover a portion of it by attributing \$350,000 to training expenses, said Joseph Maffia, the former controller of Don King Productions.

King is charged with altering Chavez's contract to include a rider that would allow him to collect \$350,000 in non-refundable training expenses from a boxer. Last week Chavez testified that he had never seen the contract that King filed in his successful claim to Lloyd's of London.

Maffia said that during telephone conversations King estimated the amount he wanted to claim from Lloyd's. "He said, 'Put down \$150,000, \$250,000, \$350,000. I don't remember the exact figure,'" Maffia said. The final figure, he testified, was \$350,000.

"He instructed me to deem a portion of the \$736,000 cheque for training expenses," Maffia said. King had written the cheque, an advance against Chavez's \$2 million purse to fight Brazier, in March 1991.

But there were not enough expenses to justify the \$350,000, Maffia said. He could find only \$130,000 to \$150,000 in claimable expenses, said the accountant. King, he said, told him to pad the expenses.

"He suggested I look at the Mirage Hotel for Spanish production costs, and Spanish advertising done through Western Media, Gladys Rosa's bill, and legal bills, Maffia said. Rosa, a King employee, is Chavez's translator.

During direct examination by the Assistant US Attorney Paul Gardephe, Maffia was almost unflappable.

He said that after he was forced to resign in September 1991, King disputed his unemployment insurance claim, sought to have his licence as a certified public accountant revoked, and asked him to repay an outstanding loan.

"Have you said you hate Don King and want to hurt him?" Gardephe asked. "Yes," Maffia said. "Do you feel the same way now?" "No," Maffia said. "I dislike him." The exchange brought chuckles from King.

In cross-examination, Peter Fleming Jr., King's lawyer, focused on whether Maffia asked King or other co-workers for a copy of Chavez's contract and why he did not secure one when Gagliardi Bros., King's retail insurance broker, asked for it.

"Did you advise Gagliardi that you were unable to find a copy of the contract?" Fleming asked. "No," Maffia said. "I was asked for it," Fleming said. "Yes," Maffia said.

After Maffia's resignation, Richard Hummers, King's vice-president of finance, filed the insurance claim.

NYT

Cricket

England's triumph of nerves

John Portman in Springs

MARK Ramprakash scored an undefeated 89 to steer England to a nervy error-filled victory over Eastern Transvaal in a 50-over day-night game, the first official fixture of their South African tour. England won by five wickets with six balls to spare.

Chasing 252 to win against a Second Division bowling attack must have seemed like an ideal way to start a tough South African summer. Leaving aside the fact that the England attack showed more guts than teeth — Gough, who went for 4½ runs an over, was the most economical — the tourists were probably pleased that Eastern Transvaal had made enough

to make a game of it. But there were less cheery thoughts throughout the England innings.

In the second over Stewart struck Stevenson twice in a row over midwicket for one-bounce fours before he pushed at one and Skeete took a superb diving catch at mid-on.

It almost got much worse. Ayrton was clearly out in the fourth over, with the score on 14 and the captain on two, when Gavin Cooke hit the stumps after a risky run. Umpire Barry Lambson did not call for a replay because there was no third umpire despite the match being broadcast on television.

In the next over Hick got a nick to a lifter from Skeete with his score on one but the wicketkeeper Bruce McBride grasped the catch. Hick celebrated his luck with two strides in the same over, one a top-edged slash over third man, the other hooked over fine leg.

Normal service seemed to have been resumed when Ayrton and Hick put on 57 for the second wicket. But then Hick, who had played three handsome pull shots to the boundary, miscued another and Meyer took a simple caught-and-bowled, straining only his neck as he waited for the ball to come down.

Ayrton came down the pitch to Jordan and was stumped, and 12 runs later Jordan, whose slow left-arm turners had troubled all the batsmen, trapped Thorpe.

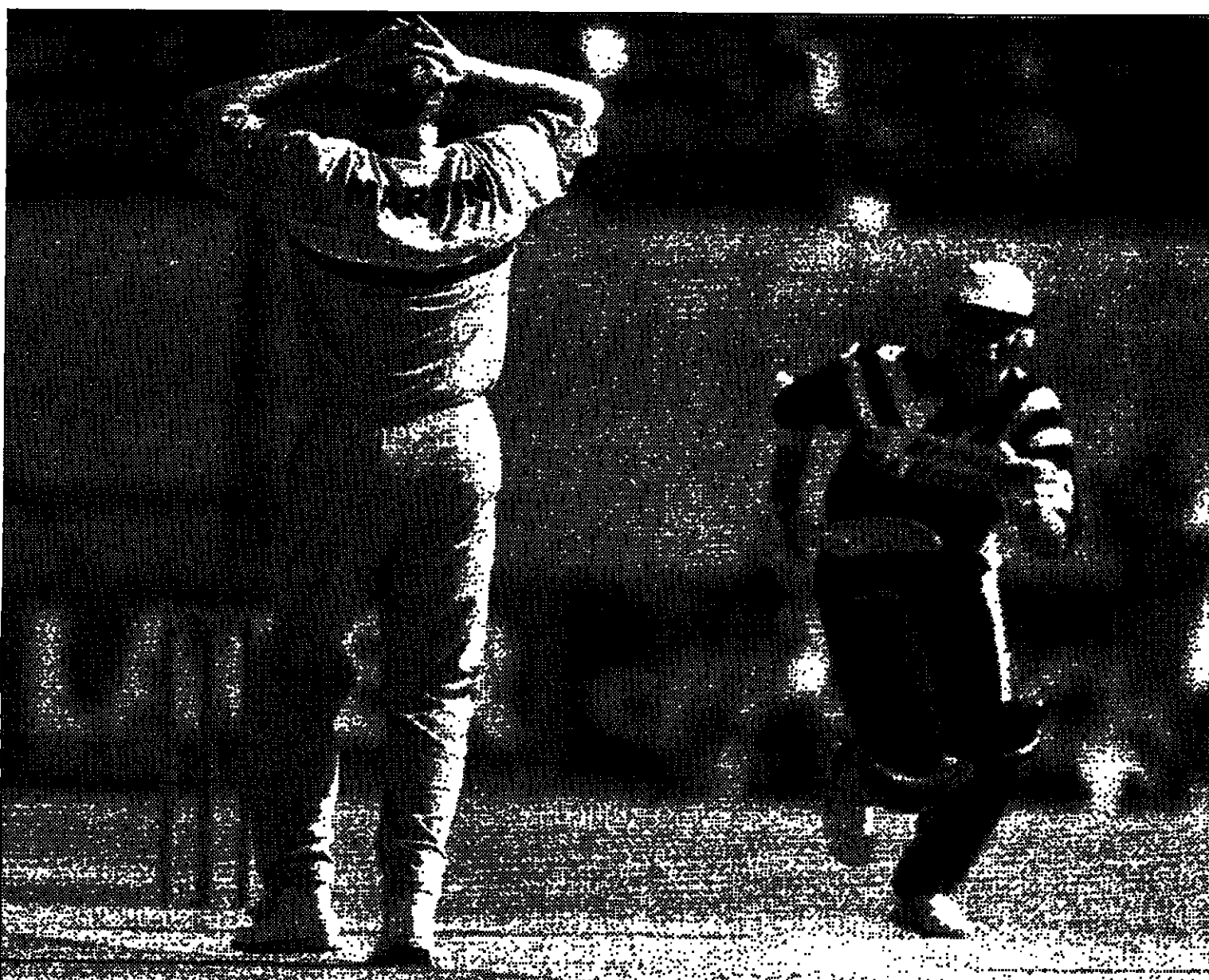
Ramprakash did England no favours, calling Robin Smith for a run that was never on and breaking up a

solid-looking fifth-wicket partnership that had yielded 48 runs. However, he went on to steer England home, putting on 99 for the sixth wicket, with Cork a reliable partner.

His 50 was reached in lucky fashion — he ran a single after McBride dropped another catch, this time off Skeete — but he scored the

lion's share of the runs in what became a morale-boosting if somewhat scratchy victory. Ramprakash was dropped three times but came up with enough sweet shots to tip the scales.

Eastern Transvaal are effectively the 10th-best provincial team in South Africa. They finished second in the



No reward... Peter Martin holds his head in despair as Eastern Transvaal's Mark Mitchley helps himself to more runs

PHOTOGRAPH CLIVE MASON

Golf

Torrance's lore demands Order

David Davies at Valderrama

BEFORE the season the bookies had a clear idea who would win the Volvo Order of Merit. Colin Montgomerie, winner for the past two years, was a miserly 12-8. Jose Maria Olazabal was a 1-1. Ian Woosnam 14-1, and you could have got 20-1 against Nick Faldo, 33-1 Miguel Angel Jimenez or Andrew Coltart, and 40-1 anyone else.

That 40-1 included Sam Torrance, the man who now leads the Order and who, over the next four days of the Volvo Masters here near Gibraltar, faces "the biggest tournament of my life so far". It will decide whether he becomes European No. 1 for the first time in his 25-year career.

Torrance has won £880,481, next best is Montgomerie on £626,651, and the only other man who could possibly win the title, Bernhard Langer, has £570,174 and, at £60,507 behind Torrance, has to finish first or second to have any chance at all.

"Winning the Order has been a lifetime ambition," said Torrance yesterday. "That and a major championship. To win the Order of Merit is like winning the Premiership, rather than the Cup — and anyway we've won the Cup twice." That was a reference to the fact that this season he has been a part of winning Ryder and, last week, Dunhill Cup teams.

HEAD TO HEAD AT VALDERRAMA

	Torrance	Montgomerie	Langer
Best finish	2nd	1st	1st
Worst finish	51st	Missed cut	21st
Events played	6	7	5
Top 10s	1	4	4
Best round	65	65	62
Worst round	81	81	78
Stroke average	73.79	71.96	71.45

How they compare this year:

	1	2	3
Position	1	2	3
Money	£880,481	£626,651	£570,174
Events played	25	19	14
Wins	3	2	3
Top 10s	12	13	7
Missed cuts	3	2	0
Stroke average	70.23	69.52	69.82
Average position	24	17	13
To par	-133	-146	-106

It has, in short, been a fabulous season for the 42-year-old Scot. His European earnings are £880,481, which do not include the £100,000 he won as part of Scotland's team at St Andrews last week or the £50,000 he took away from the World Match Play Championship where he lost in the first round.

If he wins the £125,000 first prize here he will almost certainly pass the £1 million mark, for he is far from finished with this season. After this he plays in the Sarazen World Open in Atlanta; the World Cup in China; the Hong Kong Open; the Casio World Open in Japan; the Million Dollar Challenge in South Africa; and

the Johnnie Walker World Championships in Jamaica. Of them all, though, this is the week he wants to do well. "I am," he said, "very, very ready. I have no fears. I've been given a chance to do what I've always wanted to do and I intend to take it."

Torrance, a man who likes the occasional bet, did not know about the 40-1 available at the start of the season and it was halfway through the year before he thought about a punt. By then he could not get a price worth having.

Montgomerie has a marvellous record over the past three years here. In 1992 he lost to Sandy Lyle in a play-off. In 1993 he won and last year he was in the final

group, finishing fourth. That has meant that in his professional career he has never retreated in the Order of Merit, and he is exceedingly keen to win it this year for the third time in a row.

Langer, though, is still a big threat. "He has to finish one or two," said Montgomerie. "Unfortunately he's quite good at doing that when he has to." Last year the German, in winning here, threw in a second round of 62, breaking the course record by three shots. To get into a position even to challenge for the Order, Langer has finished first and second in his last two events, and the Scots could face no more dedicated, or daunting, competitor.

The home side held a luxurious 4-1 lead after batting flurries in the first and third innings, but the Braves crept back with solo home runs by Fred McGriff and Ryan Klesko in the sixth and seventh, then took the lead in the eighth when they claimed three runs.

The crowd of 43,584 could breathe easily again only after the catcher Sandy Alomar hit a double, allowing Manny Ramirez to equalise minutes later.

Murray, a few weeks shy of 40, had not earned a single hit in his five previous appearances at the plate. "It's nice to get this little World Series jinx over with and get on with the series," he said afterwards.

Baseball

Indians take first scalp

Ian Katz in Cleveland

IT TOOK 11 innings and more than four hours, but the third game of the 1995 Fall Classic finally obeyed the script as Cleveland's Eddie Murray cracked a single to give the Indians their first win in a World Series game in 47 years.

The veteran's hit allowed the pinch runner Alvaro Espinoza to dash home, sealing a 7-6 overtime victory over the Atlanta Braves, who had silenced the sell-out crowd at Jacob's Field with a dramatic eighth-inning comeback.

The Braves now lead the best-of-seven series 2-1. The Indians desperately needed to win Tuesday night's game: no team has ever won a World Series from 3-0 down.

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Athletics

Ma's new girl beats Wang

WANG JUNKIA, whose departure in 1994 broke up China's formidable array of women distance runners, has been beaten in a 5,000 metres race by a new teenage prodigy of her former coach Ma Junren.

The out-of-form Wang trailed in behind 16-year-old Jiang Bo in the Urban Games 5,000m final in Nanjing. The young runner from Liaoning province set an Asian record at 14min 45.96sec, faster than the 1995 Gothenburg world championship pace but eight seconds off the world mark.

Wang finished seven seconds back at 14:53.08.

Wang's defeat dominated China's sports pages and rekindled the debate over her surprise defection late in 1994 from the Ma camp after she had defeated the best of the world's runners in 1993.

Ma was gracious in victory, claiming his new trainees lacked Wang's all-round ability and arguing that Wang deliberately "yielded" the race by not unleashing her explosive finish.

But Wang would have none of that and denied letting up. "I stuck close to my race plan. Jiang Bo's running today was inspired and I congratulate her. I had absolutely no thought of yielding to her. I gave all my strength."

Wang won the 5,000m at the Asian championships in Indonesia, but has not regained the world-beating form she unleashed in 1993 when she won the 10,000m at the 1993 world championships in

Stuttgart, knocked an astonishing 42sec from the 10,000m world record at the end of 1994, has soldiered on with a new team of his own formed around a lone loyalist, Qu Yunxia, the 3,000m world champion at Stuttgart and 1500m world record holder.

Ma's sole male prospect, Sun Ripei, finished third in the Urban Games 10,000 metres on Monday.

Jiang, who hails from Wang's home town of Jinzhou, has been with Ma since last year and is being hailed in China as proof that Chinese women long-distance runners are making a comeback. Ma is not making such bold claims but describes his new prodigy as "hard-working, fast and smart".

Wang formed a rival team of a dozen "Ma family" outcasts and set up a training base in the Shenyang area of north-east China. But she has

yet to reignite any of the old magic.

Ma, recovering from a car crash towards the end of 1994, has soldiered on with a new team of his own formed around a lone loyalist, Qu Yunxia, the 3,000m world champion at Stuttgart and 1500m world record holder.

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Snooker

McManus near his best again

Clive Everton in Sunderland

ALAN McMANUS reached his first world-ranking semi-final since winning the Dubai Classic 13 months ago by beating Northern Ireland's top player Joe Swail 5-1 yesterday in the Skoda Grand Prix at the Crowtree Centre.

Two splits — from his manager and from his wife — appeared last season to disturb the Scot's formidable concentration and consistency, but he now has hopes of regaining his place in the sport's top 16 having started the season in 19th place.

The first two frames were close but long pots of brown and green respectively gave McManus the lead. He was always in control of the third, and after sitting out Swail's 104 break in the fourth he clinched an impressive victory with frame-winning efforts of 98 and 75.

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All Blacks banish the blues, page 13

England survive a fright, page 15

Coca-Cola Cup soccer, page 14

Scans throw spotlight on boxers, page 15

SportsGuardian

COCA-COLA CUP, THIRD ROUND

Crystal Palace 2, Middlesbrough 2

Boro are caught on the Hopkin

Paul Weaver

MIDDLESBROUGH discovered that waiting for Juninho can be a distracting business at Selhurst Park last night. In their last match before the arrival of the Brazilian they fell two goals behind in the opening minutes and were lucky to earn a replay after being outplayed for most of the match.

For a side boasting the best defensive record in the Premiership Middlesbrough looked remarkably porous. They have conceded only four goals in the league and went into last night's match having not let in a goal for 495 minutes. But the form side in the country, with seven straight league and cup wins, were caught out twice in the first 10 minutes by the club placed fifth from bottom of the First Division.

In the fourth minute Dyer crossed from the left. McKenzie, the 17-year-old son of the British light-welterweight champion Clinton, failed to make contact with his attempted header but Hopkin came in on the far post to beat Whelan and shoot past Walsh. Middlesbrough appeared to have recovered their composure when, in the eighth minute, Martyn saved from Fjortoft and, a minute later, when Hignett drove wide from 25 yards. However, in the 10th minute they were stunned once more by Hopkin, a £750,000 close-season buy from Chelsea.

Shaw played the ball in to Dyer on the edge of the box and he rolled it into the path of Hopkin, whose left-foot shot was deflected past Walsh by Whelan. Palace have won

only one league game at home this season and their dramatic start was all the more surprising because they were without their cup-tied forwards Taylor and Freedman, who were replaced by McKenzie and Dyer.

Palace might have taken a three-goal lead in the 12th minute when Gordon once again showed the potency of his left foot and Walsh was required to scramble across his goal and tip the ball round the right post.

But three minutes later Middlesbrough started to claw their way back into the game. Fjortoft dummied when Hignett passed from the right and Barbu, showing characteristic opportunism, beat Martyn from close range.

In the 21st minute Hignett equalised after Cox's cross from the right was flicked on by Fjortoft. Palace looked deflated and might have fallen behind 10 minutes before half-time when Barbu's shot was tipped over by Martyn. But three minutes later Hopkin went close to an outrageous hat-trick when his angled shot just beat the left post.

Palace remained the dominating side after half-time. In the 62nd minute McKenzie had a goal disallowed after he had initiated the move with a splendid pass to Hopkin. In the 65th minute Hopkin yet again went close to a hat-trick when he headed over from Dyer's cross. Middlesbrough were discomfited again a minute later when Gordon beat Pearson with some ease to win a corner.

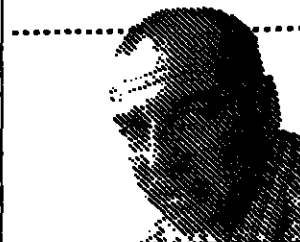
Crystal Palace: Martyn, Shaw, Roberts, Coleman, Edwards, Hopkin, Houghton, Pichler, Gordon, Dyer, McKenzie. Middlesbrough: Walsh, Pearson, Vickers, Whelan, Morris, Cox, Mustoe, Pollock, Barbu, Hignett (Moore, Tamin), Fjortoft (Gardner, 88).

Referee: G. Poll (Ting).



High flier... Wednesday's Walker heads away from Millwall's Savage in last night's Coca-Cola tie. PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK BARON

Limbering up with a handicap



Mike Selvey

THERE was holiday golf to be played in Cornwall last week. Good golf, too: a pairs tournament at Trevose, four days, highly competitive and with a subsidiary competition for professionals. The latter was won by an Australian named Wayne Riley, who, miffed at not being involved for his country in the Dunhill Cup at St Andrews, had dropped in by helicopter with his mate Richard Boxall, another tour pro, for a jolly before tooting off to Valderrama for this week's big stuff.

For Riley to be playing off the same handicap — plus one — as assorted club teaching professionals and driving-range instructors was a nonsense, and the £500 he added to the £350,000 odd he has collected on the European tour this year covered his share of the transport.

It is the nature of golf, however, that everyone should be able to compete on level ground, and the anomalies will be taken care of next year. In cricket, though, as in most sports, it does not come so readily, for unless Mike Atherton, say, bats left-handed or Devon Malcolm leaves out his contact lenses (okay, sometimes it seems that way anyway), handicapping consists of batsmen retiring when they have made a bright half-century and fast bowlers throttling back or bowling benefit-match leg-breaks.

WHICH brings us to Randjesfontein and Tuesday's opening match of England's South Africa tour. It appears to be established practice in cricket that touring sides begin their programme with a gentle limber-up in serene surroundings. Teams visiting England stroll down to Arundel to play Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk's XI (or the Duchess of Lavinia's XI as the BBC once had it); the Pakistan team will today kick off what promises to be an acrimonious Australian tour at Lilac Hill in the Perth hinterland; and England found themselves pitched against Nicky Oppenheimer's side.

The result of this latter was predictable and immaterial. The hospitality, according to

the chairman of the England selectors, was superb, the surroundings opulent, and nobody got injured — which for England is a bonus. Yet there is something not quite right about such games: something rather nastily feudal and cap-doffing about the whole operation.

There may be some entertainment in it but principally it is about flexing the financial paws. Flashing the cash. Were it more serious than that, there would be no justification, whoever covers the cost, of the benefactors' sittings taking their place in the team. But it was the Oppenheimers' bat and ball and ground, so another photograph of an Oppenheimer competing with a big name goes on the wall. Objective achieved.

Staging such matches is not the exclusive domain of wealthy South Africans. Kerry Packer has been known to make a few dance in his time; the South Africans themselves played a ridiculous game at Highclere two years ago in front of a select audience of greenwies, most of whom wondered where the horses were; and Paul Getty entertained West Indies last season (although his devotion and philanthropy to cricket as opposed to cricketers is unquestioned and low-key: it is said he helped save the Three Graces from export because he believed them to be WG, EM and GF).

BUT in truth it is all extraneous pab, and now the future of such matches may be in doubt. Just consider the England commitment this winter: they left for South Africa eight days ago and will return home on January 12, pausing less than three weeks before flying to India and Pakistan for the World Cup, returning once more at the end of the first week in April. It is near enough five months' absence.

Seen in that context, games such as that at Randjesfontein take on an unnecessary and unjustifiable aspect. The starting point for change may well be the Australians' next tour of England in 1997; they have come to realise the burden of outdated and outmoded touring schedules and the lack of real preparation given by such games. Indeed they are talking of rationalising their tour, cutting back by a month or more. "We need to cut out the crap stuff," one told me in the Caribbean last spring, "and just get on with the job in hand." Which shows what they really think of it all. It might mean a few disappointed picknickers and pricked egos, but that is the way it has to be.

Graf strikes deal

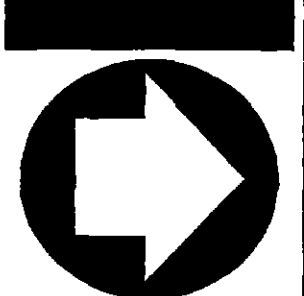
STEFFI GRAF has deposited 20 million marks (£9.6 million) with authorities to cover taxes which investigators suspect she and her father Peter may have evaded, her lawyer said yesterday.

Peter Danckert said in a statement that it had taken substantial effort to track down her millions in overseas accounts to deposit with the authorities.

Graf's father, who has

handled her financial affairs throughout her career, has been in investigative custody since August on suspicion of tax evasion.

Peter Graf has refused so far to cooperate with the investigation but his lawyer Peter Slania said the situation had changed and there would be a "new defence strategy". He said that Peter Graf was now prepared to cooperate with investigators and make a statement.



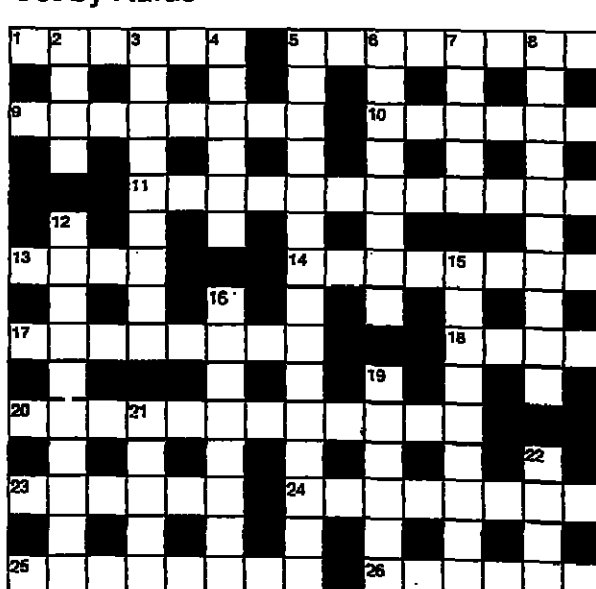
The surprise is not just that Van Sant was able to do it but that Kidman extends her range so well. As Suzanne Stone — the dim but remorselessly ambitious character she plays — narrates her story, Van Sant uses television clichés to counterpoint a deglamourised reality

Derek Malcolm

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Guardian Crossword No 20,482

Set by Rufus

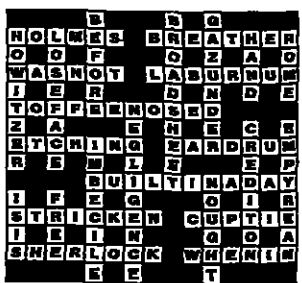


Across

- 1 A clergyman has little right to come between father and son (5)
- 8 Custom legislation included in the cost of goods (8)
- 9 Complaint of untidiness (8)
- 10 Am having a nap returning to the country (6)
- 11 Fat wedge of toffee (12)
- 12 Hoax article used as a tail-piece (4)
- 14 Last of the multi-tea blenders (8)
- 17 Two things aviators may do for a wad of cash (8)
- 18 Place where cubs may be left warm and dry (4)
- 20 What the man who intrudes in a row does (4,3,3,2)
- 23 Banger unfortunately goes the wrong way on motorway (8)

Down

- 2 Descriptive of a sharp drop in sweet production (4)
- 3 He shouldn't look polish (9)
- 4 Unlucky arrangement that would horrify Mrs Grundy (8)
- 5 It goes on all the time (8,6)
- 6 Meet primate about to postulate (8)
- 7 Colour and leave the dance (5)
- 8 A comedians' outing is usually good for a laugh (5,5)
- 12 An important part of self-expression (10)
- 15 Mother dawdles and wastes the doctor's time (8)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,481

- 16 Giving attention to gin and tonic that's drunk (8)
- 19 Pincer movement might succeed (8)
- 21 Rita's out of step (5)
- 22 A boundary gives us the lead (4)

Solution tomorrow

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